

HUMOROUS STORIES

ABOUT
PEOPLE PLACES AND THINGS



The Select Library of Fiction

*The best, cheapest, and most POPULAR NOVELS
published, well printed on good paper, and
strongly bound in picture boards.*

BY THE MOST POPULAR AUTHORS OF THE DAY.

TWO SHILLING VOLUMES.

WHEN ORDERING, THE NUMBERS ONLY NEED BE GIVEN.

VOL.

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Agatha's Husband. | Author of "JOHN HALIFAX." |
| 2 | Head of the Family. | Author of "JOHN HALIFAX." |
| 5 | The Ogilvies. | Author of "JOHN HALIFAX." |
| 7 | Olive: a Novel. | Author of "JOHN HALIFAX." |
| 11 | Half Sisters. | MISS JEWSBURY. |
| 17 | Jack Hinton. | CHARLES LEVER. |
| 22 | Harry Lorrequer. | CHARLES LEVER. |
| 27 | The O'Donoghue. | CHARLES LEVER. |
| 32 | The Fortunes of Glencore. | CHARLES LEVER. |
| 35 | One of Them. | CHARLES LEVER. |
| 38 | Mary Seaham. | Author of "GAMBLER'S WIFE." |
| 41 | Charles Auchester. | Author of "MY FIRST SEASON." |
| 52 | Young Heiress. | Mrs. TROLLOPE. |
| 53 | A Day's Ride: a Life's Romance. | CHARLES LEVER. |
| 55 | Constable of the Tower. | W. H. AINSWORTH. |
| 58 | Master of the Hounds. | "SCRUTATOR." |
| 61 | Jealous Wife. | MISS PARDOE. |
| 63 | Hunchback of Notre-Dame. | VICTOR HUGO. |
| 65 | Lord Mayor of London. | W. H. AINSWORTH. |
| 66 | Elsie Venner. | O. WENDELL HOLMES. |
| 67 | Charlie Thornhill. | C. C. CLARKE. |
| 72 | Country Gentleman. | "SCRUTATOR." |
| 74 | Marietta. | T. A. TROLLOPE. |
| 75 | Barrington. | CHARLES LEVER. |
| 76 | Beppo, the Conscript. | T. A. TROLLOPE. |
| 77 | Woman's Ransom. | F. W. ROBINSON. |
| 78 | Deep Waters. | ANNA H. DRURY. |
| 80 | Tilbury Nogo. | WHYTE MELVILLE. |

Select Library of Fiction

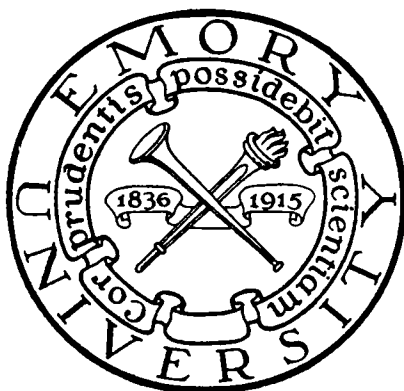
VOL.

- 81 Queen of the Seas.
- 82 He Would be a Gentleman.
- 84 Mattie: a Stray.

CAPTAIN ARMSTRONG.
SAMUEL LOVER.
Author of "OWEN: A WAIF."

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
CHARLES LEVER.
T. A. TROLLOPE.
F. W. ROBINSON.
SAMUEL LOVER.
ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
JAMES PAYN.
ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
W. H. AINSWORTH.
F. W. ROBINSON.
F. W. ROBINSON.
Mrs. MARSH.
F. W. ROBINSON.
F. W. ROBINSON.
ANNIE THOMAS.
C. C. CLARKE.
ANNIE THOMAS.
EDMUND YATES.

ROBERT W. WOODRUFF LIBRARY



- 132 Polly.
- 133 Seventy-five Brook Street.
- 134 Called to Account.
- 135 A Golden Heart.
- 136 Second Mrs. Tillotson.
- 137 Never Forgotten.
- 138 Clyffards of Clyffe.
- 139 Which is the Winner?
- 140 Archie Lovell.
- 141 Lizzie Lorton.
- 142 Milly's Hero.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
of "MATTIE: A STRAY."
ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
EDMUND YATES.
le. C. C. CLARKE.
PERCY FITZGERALD.
of "MATTIE: A STRAY."
PERCY FITZGERALD.
PERCY FITZGERALD.
ANNIE THOMAS.
TOM HOOD.
PERCY FITZGERALD.
PERCY FITZGERALD.
JAMES PAYN.
CHARLES CLARKE.
Mrs. ANNIE EDWARDES.
Mrs. LINTON.
F. W. ROBINSON.

Select Library of Fiction

VOL.		
143	Leo.	DUTTON COOK.
144	Uncle Silas.	J. S. LEFANU.
145	Bar Sinister.	C. A. COLLINS.
151	Family Scapegrace.	JAMES PAYN.
152	Mirk Abbey.	JAMES PAYN.
153	Fair Carew ; or, Husbands and Wives.	
156	Pique.	A. BEAUFORT.
157	Lord Falconberg's Heir.	C. C. CLARKE.
159	Secret Dispatch.	JAMES GRANT.
160	Guy Deverell.	Author of "UNCLE SILAS."
162	All in the Dark.	J. S. LEFANU.
166	Northanger Abbey.	JANE AUSTEN.
168	Beauclercs, Father and Son.	C. C. CLARKE.
169	House by the Churchyard.	J. S. LEFANU.
170	Owen : a Waif.	Author of "MATTIE : A STRAY."
171	Two Marriages.	Author of "JOHN HALIFAX."
172	Found Dead.	Author of "LOST SIR MASSINGBERD."
173	O. V. H.	Author of "ENSEMBLE."
177	Tenants of Malory.	J. S. LEFANU.
178	Wylder's Hand.	J. S. LEFANU.
180	A House of Cards.	Mrs. CASHEL HOEY.
184	Chips from an Old Block.	CHARLES CLARKE.
188	Lotta Schmidt.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
191	A County Family.	Author of "FOUND DEAD."
192	An Editor's Tales.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
193	Rent in a Cloud.	CHARLES LEVER.
194	Gwendoline's Harvest.	Author of "FOUND DEAD."
195	Geoffry Hamlyn.	HENRY KINGSLEY.
196	Ravenshoe.	HENRY KINGSLEY.
197	Hillyars and Burtons.	HENRY KINGSLEY.
198	Silcote of Silcotes.	HENRY KINGSLEY.
199	Leighton Court.	HENRY KINGSLEY.
200	Austin Elliot.	HENRY KINGSLEY.
201	Like Father, Like Son.	JAMES PAYN.
204	Semi-Attached Couple.	LADY EDEN.
206	Woman's Devotion.	Author of "THREE WIVES."
207	Box for the Season.	Author of "CHARLIE THORNHILL."
208	Buried in the Deep.	Mrs. CASHEL HOEY.
210	Castaway.	EDMUND YATES.
212	Aunt Margaret's Trouble.	
	Author of "SACRISTAN'S HOUSEHOLD."	
224	Two Hundred Pounds Reward.	JAMES PAYN.

HUMOROUS STORIES.

HUMOROUS STORIES

ABOUT

PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"MARRIED BENEATH HIM,"

"CLYFFARDS OF CLYFFE,"

"FOSTER BROTHERS,"

"MIRK ABBEY,"

ETC

NEW EDITION

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

1876.



HUMOROUS STORIES.

OUR CURATES.



E have had a great number of curates in our parish, and from my position as churchwarden, I am tolerably well fitted to speak upon the subject. Under "Preferments and Appointments," in the church newspapers, you may have seen, about once in every six months or so, "The Rev. Somebody Something to the curacy of Little Biddlebrigham, Devon," and have been under the mistaken impression that the young man had got a good thing; but this is far from being the case. "A title given" and a "sole charge" are the baits with which we allure juvenile divines into our parish, and we have found them very killing—the baits, I mean, not the divines; but since we are upon that subject, I may state at once that the word might have been not seldom applied to our curates themselves.

Perceval Smarte, B.A., of the University of Oxford, was a great example amongst us of this sort. It was almost a pity that a gentleman with so accurate an eye for colour, and with

so chaste a notion of costume, should have been restricted in the choice of vestments by the nature of his profession. The canon relating to ecclesiastical attire might have been suspended in his particular case with the greatest safety, and without risk of the anomaly so carefully guarded against, of a scarlet clergyman with yellow stripes. He once showed me a whole drawerful of lemon-coloured kid gloves, almost all new, which he had amassed during his lay career, and which he had no intention whatever of wearing again.

"It seems hard does it not?" sighed Perceval Smarte—and I think there was a dewiness in his large blue eyes when he said it—"but we must all make our little sacrifices." What, however, the strict letter of the highest church discipline did permit him in garments, he took the fullest advantage of. I never yet saw a curate in canonicals who had such an exceeding resemblance to a bishop. Upon one occasion, when the clerk was indisposed, I went into the vestry with our curate to assist him in attiring himself, and I shall not easily forget it. I only wish I knew the technical names for half the things—the undergarments—in which I invested him. A certain black silk waistcoat, which reached down to his hips, was fastened—I remember *that*—at the back of his right shoulder; and there was an enormous agate brooch, with a black cross upon it, the pin of which, in my clumsy attempts to fasten it, I ran into his neck. His surplice was of finest lawn and of a dazzling whiteness, made to stick out in all directions, as though inflated: this, while he remained at Little Biddlebrigham, was washed every week. His immediate predecessor had not been so particular in this matter, and wore one of a very different material. Perceval Smarte, who assisted him upon the last Sunday of his stay with us, is said to have observed to him sarcastically: "I think, my friend, if I did borrow a table-cloth to read prayers in, I would try to procure a clean one." Besides attending to his duties in the parish very assiduously, Mr. Smarte took the taste of our young ladies under his entire control; not a gown was chosen without an eye to his approbation, not a

bonnet selected without the inward reflection : " Now, I wonder what will our curate say to this ! " I must confess that I think he abused his elevated position in the pulpit to scrutinise, before the service commenced, the " novelties " recently imported by his fair parishioners, for I always noticed that he was most severe upon them on Monday mornings. He was not a poor man, or he could not have stopped so long as he did at Little Biddlebrigham, where a non-resident rector offers the hope of " a recompense far higher than any mere pecuniary reward," and, indeed, does not, I believe, ever insult our curates by the proffer of a stipend. He had a very comfortable little bachelor establishment ; and his sister sometimes came and stayed with him, who was the superior of some sort of amateur convent in the north, and wore a very becoming dress, which distinguished, as she loved to call it, her " order." While she remained, there was a series of festivities given by Mr. Perceval Smarte : such snowy napkins, such glistening plate, ay, and wine, too, of such first-rate excellence, as was not to be surpassed at the squire's (Mr. Broadland's) own table at the hall. I remember but one mischance at these entertainments of our curate, and that, I think, happened the winter before last. Mr. Smarte had an infinite deal of trouble in getting men-servants to his liking out of our parish, and the one he had then, a certain Samuel Scroggin, was only upon trial. This poor fellow had never seen such things as hot-water plates before, nor did he at all imagine that their duty was to keep our food warm ; he opined, indeed, from their form and character, that they were intended for quite another purpose, and when we trooped down into the dining-room, we found them garnishing each individual chair. Samuel thought they were to sit upon in that cold weather. That was the only occasion upon which the Rev. Perceval was ever known to use a naughty expression, and the lady superior strove in vain to drown it by a cough.

He was a very good man, and a very kind man, I do believe, although he had not much judgment in managing the

vestry, and made a great deal of fuss about a parcel of saints and martyrs, of whom nobody at Little Biddlebrigham had ever so much as heard the names. I, for one, was very sorry when that tremendous disturbance took place about the wax-candles, with which the whole world is now sufficiently acquainted, and our parish in particular was convulsed. He was a better man, I believe, after all, than the Rev. Curte Sharpely who succeeded him.

Mr. Sharpely was a scholar of that magnitude, that one could never understand above half his sermons, and the other half was devoted to personalities. Upon the very second Sunday of his preaching, he flew at the poor squire for having a guest in his house who had peculiar opinions, and did not come to church. He asked us all what was our opinion of that man who could take tea with a Deist; and the squire and his family walked straight out of their pew at once, followed by all their servants, and by the sexton, who is also the squire's gardener. The clerk himself was seen to vacillate at his desk, doubtful whether his allegiance was most due to his temporal or spiritual head. Altogether, the scene was of a character not easily to be erased from the mind of a Little Biddlebrighamer. Mr. Curte Sharpely had a great deal to contend against in our parish after this; and it was wonderful that he effected so much good as he really did. He had, however, a very strong will, and frightened our village schoolmaster a great deal more than the schoolmaster could ever frighten the boys; the mistress alone stood up against him womanfully, declining to work his somewhat exacting behests, upon the ground that she "was not a clergyman, and able to perform impossibilities." He made himself acquainted with the weak points of everybody's character, with the skeleton in everybody's house, with the unpleasantnesses that had taken place in every family in Little Biddlebrigham, and by these means attained considerable power without making a single friend. The neighbouring clergy disliked our little curate; but at their district theological meetings he took the lead, and was by no means to be put down. The bishop,

it was rumoured, had asked his opinion upon a Hebrew passage, when he came down hither to confirm ; the archdeacon did not venture to patronise him ; the rural dean desisted from his usual rubber upon the night when our curate dined with him. Nobody dined with Mr. Curte Sharpely ; he had cold meat at his meals in preference to hot, and drank with them some peculiar effervescent mixture of his own contriving, which, I believe, turned acid upon his stomach, and in some degree accounted for his disposition. His study and accurate knowledge of the classics and divinity did not soften his manners, nor, indeed, prevent them from being absolutely ferocious. People seldom voluntarily addressed him more than once ; nobody ever differed from him after the first time. He had a rug at his front-door with *Cave canem* stamped upon it, and Mr. Broadland used to say it meant, "Beware of the curate ;" most of the Little Biddlebrighamers adopted a still freer translation, and held it to signify, "Please to wipe your shoes." When Mr. Curte Sharpely left us, we were certainly most of us pleased, but were yet obliged to confess that he had taken the parish by the shoulders, and shoved it along the roads to health and education further than any curate who had come before him.

A very horrible thing happened in our parish after his departure. A young gentleman, the Rev. Julian Montacute, tutor in the squire's family, consented to take the services for a few weeks, until we got a minister to suit us, for our non-resident rector had been too terrified by the letters of Curte Sharpely ever to appoint another man without some trial. Mr. Montacute was handsome, elegant, and had attained high honours at the universities ; but he was of very tender years. We doubted whether, transferred as he was about to be from private to public life, he would muster courage enough to read and preach before Little Biddlebrigham ; it was agreed among the most influential families that it would be quite excusable if he declined preaching a sermon at all. We need not, however, have given ourselves any concern about this matter, as Mr. Julian Montacute not only read

with great judgment and perfect nerve, but also astonished us with one of the most beautiful flights of extempore pulpit oratory with which our parish has been favoured. As learned as Curte Sharpely, as dignified as Perceval Smarte, this young man had, besides, a store of pathos and a charm of delivery that were peculiarly his own. There was scarcely a lady without a handkerchief to her eyes ; and in the squire's pew, Miss Eleanor—— But there, I will repeat no domestic scandal ; the misadventure of our whole parish with Mr. Julian Montacute is surely of itself sufficiently interesting. The whole congregation, in short, was delighted ; nor was there a tea-party in Little Biddlebrigham for weeks where the eloquence of our young divine was not the unfailing theme of praise.

On the next Sunday, the Wesleyan Chapel was deserted ; and the Ranter at the slate-quarry on the hill preached to empty air. The church was filled to its porch with a crowd of eager listeners, and again the Rev. Julian Montacute won every ear and moistened every eye. Two young ladies, who were about to be married in our parish, entreated as a particular favour that they should be united by his graceful hands ; but he delicately declined to perform this ceremony for them. Several young ladies *not* about to be married—— but, again, let me confine myself to our public misfortune. In a word, our minister was the idol of Little Biddlebrigham, and the epithets applied to him ranged through the whole pet-curate scale, from “so unaffectedly devout,” down to “such a dear darling duck of a man.” What need for any more advertisements ? Was there any man, whether “strictly Anglican” or “purely Evangelical,” for whom we would exchange the Rev. Julian Montacute ? Most certainly not ; but as he still refused either to marry, to bury, or to christen, upon the alleged ground of his mere temporary appointment, and as self-willed persons went on marrying, and dying, and being born in the parish just as usual, it became necessary to look out for another curate. Our secret design, indeed, was to restrict the new man to the performance of these routine

duties, and to keep our cherished Montacute on, if it were possible, for preaching purposes. Upon the very day, however, that the Rev. Decimus Green and his mother—who was almost another curate, dear, good soul, as it turned out afterwards—came down to Little Biddlebrigham, Mr. Montacute fled. He left a letter upon the squire's breakfast table to say he was very sorry, but that he had never been ordained at all, and was not a clergyman ; and the squire brought it down to the vestry, and almost turned us into stone with the news. The two young brides congratulated themselves very considerably that "the wicked wretch, about whom, to say truth, they had always had their suspicions," had not performed that ceremony about which they had been so anxious. The Wesleyan minister remarked with a chuckle that he had always understood that clergymen of the Church of England were recognisable to the faithful by some infallible sign ; while the Ranter assured his again overflowing audiences that the whole affair was a judgment upon Little Biddlebrigham. Nobody else, I hope, was pleased in our parish.

Poor Mr. Decimus Green, than whom no mortal was ever simpler or more truthful, was pestered to death about his credentials after this, and our theological stable-door most carefully locked after the stealing of the steed. He had not the eloquence of the late usurper of our pulpit, and we were inclined to be dissatisfied with him just at first ; but when we got to know his earnestness and intrinsic merit, we somehow learned to like his discourses too ; they were good, indeed, of themselves, only he could not preach them, on account of his being so shy and nervous. It was one of the pleasantest sights in the world to look at dear Mrs. Green while her son was delivering his sermons ; her pride in them and him was so entirely unaffected and undisguised, and, at the same time, as it seemed, so right and agreeable.

"What did you think of my son Mus this morning ?" was what she would say to me every Sunday while we waited for him to come out of the vestry, after service, in order that we three might walk home together, for we lived in the same

quarter of the little town, quite in the midst of it, and away from the sea ; or, "Mus is rather long at times ; don't you find him so ?" she would now and then observe ; and when you said, "No, certainly not," as of course you did, she would smile as only mothers can when their boys are praised. In the summer time, when Little Biddlebrigham was rather fashionable, and strangers came down to bathe and enjoy the sands, she was doubly interested in what the congregations thought about him ; and it was our delight to represent them as being enthusiastically admiring ; for we all loved Mrs. Green, I think, and the poor most of all. While Decimus went out among them with his supply of spiritual comforts, his mother made her regular rounds with a great basketful of temporal ones, and she was certainly not less welcome than her son. Of all the curates which Little Biddlebrigham ever had, indeed, these two, who worked so well together, were certainly the best. The old lady had no fault—or at least, now that she is gone, we will not confess that much—the young man had but one. Mus or Decimus Green was obstinate—obstinate as a pig, as a jackass, as a man with a scientific theory ; in fact, despite his modesty, no man who did not know him could tell how obstinate Decimus Green was. Last summer, our town became so fashionable, that its ordinary accommodations proved insufficient for its throng of visitors. The gentlemen, therefore, gave up the use of our half-dozen bathing machines entirely to the ladies, while they themselves migrated into a neighbouring bay, taking their own towels with them, and keeping their sixpences in their pockets ; among them, of course, was the Rev. Decimus Green. Being somewhat delicate, and having a good deal of indoor work to do, he had lately possessed himself of a horse, in which he took much pride and pleasure.

It was a handsome, well-bred mare, but exceedingly self-willed ; and our curate, although a tolerable rider, was not quite the man to subdue her. She was somewhat tender in the legs, and salt water had been recommended for them daily by the equine faculty. "You may bring a horse to

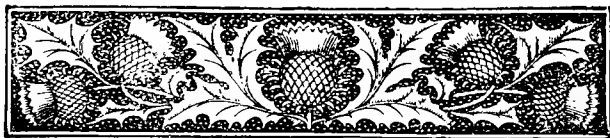
water," says the proverb, "but you can't make him drink;" and you may also bring one to the sea beach without getting it into the sea. Mr. Green's man had been thrown in pretty deep places more than once already, and had given it as his opinion that he was engaged to be a groom, and not to be a merman. The mare, he said, was quite unmanageable in the water; and our curate, of course, said she was nothing of the kind. To prove this, moreover, he determined to ride the mare in himself. She was to be brought to him while he was bathing, which by-the-bye was not very early in the morning; and then, whether he stuck on her or not in the sea, it would be but of little consequence. Myself and several other friends were present upon the first occasion, curious to see whether the trial or the curate would come off.

The animal was led willingly enough to the sands, and suffered her master—who, however, had to swim in and land for that purpose—to mount her unresistingly; but her complaisance extended no further. Now with her fore-feet planted resolutely on the beach, she protested with her hindlegs against moving seaward, and now rampant upon these hindlegs, she sparred furiously at ocean with her remaining two; but the Rev. Decimus Green sat her like a centaur, or as if he had been fastened on Mazeppawise with cords or cobbler's wax. At length, putting her head right for the waves, he called out to the groom to give her the whip; the order was obeyed by a most tremendous cut with a hunting thong. Griselda—that was the docile creature's name—gave one terrific bound into the air, turned short about almost before she touched ground again, and flew, with the unfortunate unclothed Decimus upon her, straight back for her stable in the High-street. The poor fellow had no time to throw himself off: past the beach where the ladies were sitting and knitting; by the post-office, where the mail had just come in, and the crowd were enquiring for letters; through the little square, where the market women were bargaining with the fashionables; by the squire's lawn, where Mrs. Broadland and the Miss Broadlands were gardening after breakfast; by the

National School, just emptying its throng of pupils and amateur teachers ; and so to his own stable door, where the sagacious Griselda stopped. This is what I hear from other sources. I did not see Decimus Green upon that occasion, nor has he been since beheld by mortal Little Biddlebrighamer. For the remainder of that day, he shut himself up in his own house, and departed from us, with his mother, under cover of the ensuing night, for ever. He derived, or seemed to derive no comfort from my written suggestion that the thing was, after all, not so unusual, or had been done before at least, for a good purpose, by Lady Godiva. "Never," he writes, "never can I look that congregation in the face again."

This was the last but one of our curates at Little Biddlebrigham ; and a delicacy, which I trust will be appreciated, causes me to postpone for a while any description of our present one.





TWO FIRST-CLASS PASSENGERS.



RESIDE upon the great South Angular line of railway, and go to town, and return from it every day ; the two journeys consume about two hours, and having taken them regularly for the last fifteen years, I must have spent at least a twelvemonth of my existence in a first-class carriage ; I, therefore, may be supposed to know a little about the passengers. I am acquainted with almost everybody's name who gets into the train at the half-dozen stations between my own and London, and whether he will return by our 5.30, or not, to a dead certainty. I know who are the stockbrokers, and who the lawyers, and who the bill discounters, and the places of business of every one of them, although our acquaintance is only acknowledged by a nod, nor ever extends beyond the terminus at London Bridge. When A or B is not in the 11.45 "up" twice running, we look for him in the *Times*, and find him under Deaths or Bankrupts ; and when I myself, X, am missing, I feel confident that the rest of the alphabet will as easily understand what has become of me. We do not pretend to entertain the sympathetic feelings of a Rousseau, or a De Lamartine, towards our friends of the South Angular ; our conversations—which are

carried on under cover of our respective newspapers—are kept studiously general, for there is no knowing what religion or politics any of us may profess, or whether we profess any at all ; we generally discuss the money-market only, and the murders—trusting that, if there be a homicide or two in the same carriage, any offensive remark may be understood not to apply to the present company. We season-ticket holders are, of course, well known by sight to all the company's officers, so that they rarely give us the trouble of producing our passes at all, nor is one of us more easily recognisable than C, the leviathan banker, who makes the train stop in front of his own house, where there is no station, to the concentrated disgust of the three classes. He is called by us familiarly “the Old Cock ;” but although he knows this, it is not, of course, customary to address him by that appellation. My brother, however, who is a stranger to the South Angular, going down with me once upon a visit by the 5.30, remarked, unhappily, upon occasion of the usual stoppage in front of the huge red house, “Oh, this is where the Old Cock lives, who causes you so much annoyance, is it ?” Whereupon, the great C, who was sitting opposite, crimsoned excessively, got out slower than usual, and has never nodded to me since. A little after this, a new ticket-collector having been appointed by the company, he called upon the whole carriage-full, which included but one casual passenger, to produce our tickets ; which, with the exception of the Old Cock, we readily did. He confessed that he had it in his waistcoat pocket, but that no human power should induce him to exhibit it ; he harangued the unfortunate collector for nearly a quarter of an hour (during which the train was, of course, delayed, and the business-passengers goaded to frenzy), on the absurdity of his (C's) being unknown to any person on the South Angular railway, no matter how newly-appointed, or how forgetful by disposition ; he took the official to task, just as though he himself, the Old Cock, were the aggrieved party, or as if he were the Lord Chief Baron addressing some great offender against the law.

"Nay but," urged the poor man, "it is my duty to see your ticket, Sir, whether you have compounded for the year or not. You may, for all I am supposed to know to the contrary, have lent, or even sold your——"

"I sell my ticket? I abuse my privilege?" cried the old fellow in a terrible voice. "Give the rascal into my hand, John." (This to his son, who was sitting opposite). Whereupon the collector got off the step with great agility.

"What am I to do?" said the discomfited, appealing to the rest of us, "I ought to take the gentleman into custody."

C had relapsed behind his paper in high dudgeon, and would reply to no man's intercession upon this subject further, while his son John shook his head very decidedly, saying:—

"He *won't* give it up. I have known him for forty years. He *won't* give it up; I know him *so* well."

Indeed, so it happened, and after a consultation among the officials upon the platform, and a very prolonged stoppage of the train, the Old Cock was carried on in triumph, still stertorous with indignation.

These little incidents are the only ones, as I have said, which to my knowledge ever interfered with the strictly business character of our daily transits; but when I have chanced to be detained longer than usual in town, and to miss the 5.30 "down," I have met with more interesting companions. Three times, by the evening express, I have travelled with a gentleman bound for the other side of the Channel, from whom I always parted with regret: a middle-aged, rather ruddy-complexioned man, spare and tall, with an intimate acquaintance with foreign countries, and a fund of stories and adventures, which it was very pleasant to draw upon. Though we exchanged cards, Mr. Settler never told me what was his profession; but I set him down as a traveller for some great house, at a salary, perhaps, of seven hundred a year, and I am seldom wrong in such calculations. He carried a particularly beautiful Geneva watch, with turquoise

figures on it, which must have cost forty guineas at the very least, but his dress was otherwise plain and insignificant. About a week after I had met him for the third time, I took a house at Dover for the season for my wife and family, to whom I used to run down from London every week. I was returning to the City by an evening train, soon afterwards, for which the poor voyageurs from France were, as usual, not in time, in consequence of the delays at the Custom House, when I heard my travelling friend's voice outside the window, and instantly looked forth to welcome him in. Somehow or other, however, he had disappeared at that very instant, and I seemed doomed to ride the whole way to London in company of a solitary stranger, who entered at the open door instead. He was big enough for two, indeed, but singularly uncommunicative, replying to the few civilities which I ventured upon, in gruff monosyllables ; and, coiling himself up in a corner, with his cap over his eyes, in the manner of the true passenger ruffian. Still, I could not help thinking that at some time and place, both forgotten, I had seen this man and spoken to him before ; the remembrance of him was like one of those mysterious experiences which we all have of having previously witnessed some passing scene, which our mortal eyes can never in reality have beheld ; but indistinct as this was, it was strong enough to drive all thoughts from my mind, except the absorbing one,—“To whom is he like ? and where have I met this sulky fellow before ?”

Presently, however, my mind reverted to the voice I heard at starting, and immediately this idea combined with it, and I said to myself :

“Why it is Mr. Settler himself to whom this man is somehow like after all !”

True, my old acquaintance was a spare man, and this a person stout even to obesity. The former had a voice especially pleasing, and the latter a grunt that could scarcely be reckoned human ; that a convivial visage, and this a face from which ill-health and ill-humour together had expelled

every trace of jollity. Still, having acquired my idea with so much trouble, I was not the man to let it easily go again, but flattered and nourished it in my mind, until it grew larger and stronger, and at last shot up into the full belief that this uncommunicative stranger was not only like Mr. Settler, but was Mr. Settler himself ! No other than he, I now felt persuaded, could have presented himself at the carriage window so immediately after my hearing his voice close beside it.

"Sir," said I, composing myself in my corner, as if to sleep, "I should like to know how long I may hope to rest myself. Will you kindly favour me with the time?"

I shot through my fingers an eager glance, as the stout gentleman pulled his watch out, with an expression of impatience at being roused. My scheme had succeeded ; my suspicions were confirmed. It was the old Geneva watch with the turquoise figures.

"Mr. Settler," said I, quietly, "why do you wish to cut my acquaintance?"

"Why, the fact is," replied he, in his natural frank voice, and not without a touch of pathos in it, "I am so ill, and such an object, that I am positively ashamed to be recognised ; do you observe how tremendously stout I have grown?"

"Of course I do," said I ; "it would be ridiculous to pretend otherwise ; why you are three times your usual size at the very least !"

"There is no need to exaggerate, goodness knows," rejoined he gravely ; "a man with such a dropsy as this is no fit subject for joking."

My old acquaintance indeed exhibited so much acrimony and bad humour that I was sorry I spoke to him at all, and felt quite relieved when, wheezing and grumbling to the last, he parted company from me at the terminus.

On the next Saturday I again went down to Dover, and only reached the station just in time to hit the train. I therefore threw myself into the nearest first-class carriage,

and was off before I ever looked to see who was my companion.

"How are you, my boy?" cried Mr. Settler, for he it was, spare and hearty as ever. "I am afraid I was rather cross with you the other day."

"Cross!" said I, a little grimly, "is not the word for it; you were a bear of the first water; and, by-the-bye, what has become of your dropsy?"

"Well," rejoined he, "I have been tapped since I saw you."

"Tapped!" cried I, laughing, "why you have been emptied—drained!"

"Yes," answered Mr. Settler evasively; "I dare say it seems so. I am subject to these attacks. They're hereditary. Have you seen to-day's paper?"

So we turned the conversation to other subjects, and spent the time between London and Folkestone as pleasantly as usual.

A month elapsed, and then I met my friend once more in the up-express, going to town for the best advice, he said, and stouter than ever. However, he was very good-humoured this time, observing that he was not going to suffer the disease to prey upon his spirits any longer; only from his late voyage and its accompaniments he was really very exhausted, and presently fell asleep, looking, as I thought, like Falstaff after a fit of sea sickness.

As I sat close by him, whistling softly, and staring at his right leg, a very singular sight presented itself. I saw Mr. Settler's right calf sink gradually down, and presently repose about his ankle. I stooped down to investigate this sliding phenomenon, and discovered it to be entirely composed of the best French kid gloves; the other calf I pricked with my scarf pin, and concluded it to be composed of the same unfeeling material. Elated by these revelations I cautiously applied the same ingenious instrument to my friend's waistcoat; it penetrated at least three inches, up to the fox's head which surmounted it, without meeting with any flesh and

blood ; the sleeper never so much as winked an eye. I then took the liberty of unfastening the first and second buttons about his ample chest, whereupon I came upon fine cambric ; I turned back case after case, and there peeped forth an end of Valenciennes lace. I took hold of this very delicately and gave it a gentle pull — one yard ! two yards ! ten yards ! twenty yards of such a trimming as I have only seen in books upon the fashions rewarded my dexterity. Throughout this operation the stout party, sleeping like a child, reminded me of the spider who, out of his own interior, supplies such charming gossamer work. Then, having pocketed the Valenciennes, replaced the cambric, and fastened the buttons, I woke my still stout but somewhat reduced acquaintance, and observed, “I beg your pardon, but your right calf has slipped down from the usual place, Mr. Settler.”

“It is a false one,” answered he with frankness ; “it is, in fact, French kid gloves. Mrs. Settler compels me to do it, although I abominate the practice. A man in my dangerous state of health should think of something else than defrauding the revenue.”

“Don’t you feel somewhat relieved, though ?” enquired I, producing the Valenciennes.

“Sir,” said he, in some confusion, and twitching at his waistcoat, “I am sure that I am in the hands of a man of honour.”

“Perhaps,” said I, blushing a very little ; “but I have the sternest possible sense of duty.”

“Custom House duty ?” enquired he, good naturedly ; then, with his old pathos he added,

“You have a wife, a loving wife yourself, Sir.”

“I have,” said I ; and I confess I was a good deal moved.

“How well she’d look in that old Valenciennes !” urged Mr. Settler, and that with an air of such sincere admiration, that I really could not find it in my heart to give the poor fellow up. I never saw him again from that day to this, and there is no reason to suppose that after that clemency of

mine he did not give up his contraband habits, and became an honest man.

It was in a collar and sleeves trimmed with that Valenciennes that my wife went up with me to town for the Handel Festival ; we were a large party in the carriage, and enjoyed the journey very much. Amongst others was a strange young gentleman, very well-informed and agreeable, who kept us in peals of laughter with his lively sallies. Mrs. X. had seen the address upon his portmanteau, and whispered to us that he was a viscount, and perhaps we did not appreciate him the less upon that account ; he had all that *abandon* and keen animal spirits which distinguish the young English aristocracy, and make them the pleasantest fellows in the world to travel with, and he had also a diamond ring which he was kind enough to let us examine, of very great brilliancy and value ; such a hand too, delicate, graceful, thin, and such an exquisite curling ear ; in short, as my wife, judging from these symptoms, observed, with an irrepressible enthusiasm, “ a youthful Cavendish, all over.”

When we arrived at London Bridge, he bade adieu to us in the most affable manner, and drove away in a simple hansom, with all the air of a man accustomed to keep his carriage. On our road to Sydenham we were all loud in his praises, when suddenly my wife threw up her hands, and cried out that her purse was gone, with half her quarter's allowance in it ; there must have been a hole in her pocket, or one of the railway porters had taken it, or she had never brought it with her at all ; she would believe anything in fact, rather than suffer the breath of suspicion to sully that mirror of nobility, the viscount. Judge, then, our surprise when at the bottom of this pocket was discovered the identical ring, which had evidently slipped off those aristocratic fingers while they were appropriating the purse. Upon our return to town, I took the trinket to a jeweller's, fully expecting to find that the precious stone was made of glass, but to my astonishment and pleasure it turned out to be a real diamond, and that of a value very considerably greater than

the stolen money. We advertised it for a few days in the newspapers, but, as we expected, without its being enquired after by its late proprietor ; so, besides the Valenciennes trimming for her collar and sleeves, my wife has a handsome diamond ring for her middle finger, both presented to her, indirectly by two of my fellow-passengers.





OUR FOREIGN RELATIONS.



E have the privilege, or esteemed it so until lately, of living in one of the pleasantest spots of the pleasantest country in the world. Our village of Riversmeet has nothing but picturesque dwellings in it, although not two of them are alike. Here, for instance, is Seaview Cottage upon the very brink of the beach, and in a line with the little pier-head, very elegantly but strongly built of flint-stone—as it has need to be when the nor'easters set this way—with a stone balcony running round the upper story, from which there is a grand view of the high white cliffs about St. Bride's in Wales, the green Glamorgan Mountains, and the crowded Channel; and at night a no less interesting one of moving lights at sea and stationary lights on dangerous rocks and at the mouths of harbours. There, again, is Marine Villa with its union-jack upon the lawn in front, a boat stuck up on end for a summer-house, and walks behind that run zigzag up the cliff. Then, as we get more inland by some fifty yards, there is, close by the stream, Bridge Hall, a four-roomed little doll's house of a place, with a flight of steps down to the water's edge, and a little maid upon them always washing dishes; then Rose Bower,

whose lattice windows can scarcely be shut for the white and red blossoms that will push their fragrant faces within ; and then—one, two, three, yes, fifthly—there is Woodbine Lodge, in magnificent grounds of its own, nearly half an acre, with honeysuckle, and woodbine, and sweetbrier running riot all over the place, as though Mrs. Fairseat did not keep a gardener—which she does in common with ourselves and the rector—working for each of us on alternate days ; sixthly, comes our own dear darling home, “the Fishery,” which, from the east, looks down upon the river, and from the south right up the wooded gorge over the Ivy-bridge and the salmon weir to Lillie’s Leap, that great dark pool among the shadows, where the cavalier lady drowned herself when her lover married some other pretty young person—as was the custom, it seems, in the Stuart times. From those of our upper windows which look northward, we catch glimpses of the Channel through the trees ; and if you want a whiff of the heather and the finest air in Devonshire, you have only to climb the hill behind the house to get it. “Henrietta”—that’s me — “Henrietta always gets prosy over the scenery,” my brother says ; and, indeed, I do like to dilate a little about the Fishery and Riversmeet, I’ll own ; the very street is so charming in its quaintness and irregularity—here a bow-window and there a bay, and here again the simplest little diamond panes, through which you can scarcely see what is for sale inside. Riversmeet is not London, to be sure, nor Paris ; but it supplies all we can require ; and as for scenery !—well, until Cousin Clara and her niece came down to stay with us last month, I thought our scenery peerless.

They had been on the Continent exactly a year ; but one would have thought, to hear them, they were some of those unhappy foreigners whose mission is to prophesy, with such infallible accuracy, the date of Perfidious Albion’s downfall, and to underrate every excellence she boasts. “Oh my dear Henrietta,” said Clara, the instant her arms were off my neck at our first meeting, and the kissing was over—“we’ve

got so much to tell you that I don't know where to begin ; we've had such a delightful year, such a charming expedition ! Italy, Austria, the Ionian Islands, Greece, Constantinople, Switzerland, and France (but that's nothing) ! Nice place you've got here ; but you must not expect us to admire *English* scenery, after what we've been used to. Must she, Charlotte ?”

Charlotte, her niece, is a round piece of luggage, with a single sentence attaching to her by way of address, which she exhibits very good-naturedly whenever spoken to—“ I'm sur I don no, auntie.” The rest of her labels—for she had some others before she started, I know—have been torn off and utterly lost in change of trains, diligences, steam-packets, vetturinos, and the like, and in conflicts with extortioners and official persons. She remembers dimly some of her foreign sufferings and discomforts, but has forgotten everything else.

“ I'm sur I don no, auntie.”

“ Well, cousins,” said I, laughing, “ since you have never been at Riversmeet before, it will be strange indeed if we can't show you something here both new and striking.”

“ What, my dear ?” said Clara, stopping on the landing, halfway to the bed-room which we had prepared for her, and which looks on one side to the river, and on one side to the sea—“ what can you possibly have to show *me* ? Temple, whirlpool, ruin, cathedral, picture-gallery, snow-mountain, geyser, volcano—we've seen them all. Ah, my dear Henrietta,” she went on, sitting down upon the fifth step from the top, “ you should have climbed Vesuvius. These stairs remind me a good deal, do you know, of Vesuvius—only there are no steps there, of course, and no carpet, for the ground is red-hot to tread upon ; and there was a naked man, or nearly so, pulling me up by a rope, and another pushing me behind. Some were carried in a sort of sedan ; but that's dreadfully dangerous, your heels being higher than your head, and the bearers wanted two pound ten, or it might have been two and tenpence, for we could never calculate

those scudi . . . Well, what a nice little bed-room ! Ah, but you should see the bed-rooms in Germany, snowy white and eiderdown ; the bed is a-top of you, and the furniture just like that of a sitting-room. Gedenken Sie unser bed-room zu Cologne, Charlotte ? ”

“ I’m sur I—— Oh yes, it was where we got taken up by the police. Wasn’t it, auntie ? ”

“ What was that ? ” said I, beginning to feel interested.

“ Oh nothing,” said Clara ; “ only a ridiculous business about passports. Charlotte, in my absence, was asked if we had got passports, and she very foolishly said that she was sure she did not know, and they locked us up. It was nothing. What a pretty little river ! Ah, you should see the Moselle—you pronounce it wrongly in England—fifty times its breadth, and with ever so much bigger rocks in it than these, shooting, whirling, fizzing . . . There now, that little bay across the Channel reminds me immensely of the Gulf of Catania, in Sicily, only, of course, on a very humble scale. This sort of thing seems all so dwarfed and insignificant after having been so much abroad—that’s the advantage of foreign travel, it enlarges your mind so much. What a little tuppenny-hapenny pier you’ve got ! Ah, you should have seen the——Dear me ! that’s the second dinner-bell, isn’t it ? Do you know, in some places in the Tyrol we were summoned to table by a horn—so romantic, was it not ? And so were the pigs. We’ll be down directly ; we never took more than fives minutes to dress when we were travelling—tables d’hôte never wait, you know. La, Henrietta”—as I was leaving the room—“ how queerly your dress sets behind ! I never saw a dress set so in my life, except once, at the baths of Leuk, in Switzerland ; but there they wore crowns on their heads, and you don’t do that, of course.” She had got her face in the water, but was talking on for all that, when I went down.

It is a thousand pities, thought I, that Cousin Clara, who has been a pleasant person enough for thirty years, should be so changed by thirteen months of foreign experience, as

not to permit me to get a word into the conversation—the monologue rather—edgeways: and I wickedly called to memory Mr. Hood's similitude of some travelled minds to copper-wires, which get the narrower by going further, for I was outraged by the comparisons which put our dear Rivers-meet so completely in the shade; however, determining not to annoy my Brother John with complaints, and trusting that memory would fail our guest at last, I came smiling down to dinner. John had been out all the afternoon providing for our table with his rod, and there was a very fine salmon and some trout.

"Trout! I adore trout," Clara began; "and these, for their size, are excellent; but you should have seen the trout at——"

I managed to get a bone in my throat, and to enlist Clara's services in patting my back and giving me bread, just here, or John, who is an enthusiast about his trout, would have been much annoyed, I'm sure, by the promised comparison. On she went again!

"Roe? No, thank you; salmon-roe is nothing after caviare. 'Caviare to the multitude,' you know, because everybody eats it on the west coast of Italy."

"I thought caviare was a Russian dish?" said I, innocently.

"Well, yes, it is in some sort a Russian dish; but it is also a very favourite food with the Italians. Anchovy? Please. Anchovy comes from Italy too, as you may have heard, and gives its name to the island of—— No, that's sardines, by-the-bye. But it don't matter. Thank you, yes. This mutton reminds me: did you ever happen to taste sheep's ribs dried in the sun, Cousin John?" (My brother, who is fond of delicate eating, here gave a little shudder.) "Well, you've no idea how good it is; we had it in the Tyrol; no—at St. Quirico, in Italy. Didn't we, Charlotte?"

"I'm sur I don no, auntie."

"Nonsense, child! Don't you remember how angry you made the woman by offering to count her beads for her, if

she would only cook our dinner? Charlotte was such a plague that day to us, and would not sleep at night."

"Mosquitoes," murmured the niece, "and a tarantula."

"Oh yes, of course," said Clara, just glancing at the interruption, "we had our pains as well as our pleasures; nay, privations at times; but then at times what luxuries! Why, this light wine here, which I dare say you give five shillings a bottle for——"

"I give ten!" shrieked Brother John, "and it's real Johannisberg."

"Bless me, is it, indeed? Well, now, that stood us in Florence about a quarter of a scudo—about a shilling."

John to himself, but very audibly: "That's a whopper."

"These are capital dumplings, however, of yours; you never get a dumpling out of England, that I will say for it; and the grapes, I suppose, from your nice little hothouse yonder. Ah, if you went to Rome, you'd never touch a grape at home afterwards."

"What are you eating them for, then?" demanded Brother John rather rudely; but as he spends half the day in pruning them, it was enough to put him out.

He was not at all recovered, I could see, when he came to us ladies in the drawing-room, but Clara did not perceive it.

"Well, John, I've been talking to Henrietta, and I must say I think you ought to take her a little ramble abroad next summer—just into Switzerland, or to the shores of the Mediterranean."

"I'm——" I dropped a cup here, with a great noise, and so lost Brother John's answer, but I'm pretty sure he said "no" by her reply.

"Well, I'm surprised at you, cousin! Men with only one lady to take care of, think themselves exceedingly fortunate abroad, I promise you. Your sister need not have another bonnet, and but very little luggage: it's not usual, I assure you; Charlotte and I travelled all over the south of Europe with a carpet-bag between us. And you can buy your shirts

—I heard this from a very nice man whom I sat next to at the Switzer Hof at Lucerne—buy a shirt when you want it, wear it as long as you can without a *blanchisseuse*, and then buy another. Ah, John, you'd so enjoy Napoli!"

"What's that?" growled Brother John.

"What you English call Naples, to be sure. Such an enchanting place! Everybody a nobleman, except quite the rabble; and such macaroni! you have to hold it ever so high in the air, throw your head back, and let it settle down gradually upon your stomach. Tea? Thank you. You should taste the Russian tea."

"This *is* the Russian tea, my dear Clara," said I, "for we are extremely particular about this matter."

"Oh dear no; nothing of the sort. Excuse me: your London tradesmen are such cheats. It comes upon camels the whole way, and therefore it is absurd that you should think to get it in England. I like your cream, though, very much. You should taste the goat's milk upon the Wengern Alps; shouldn't they, Charlotte?"

"Sour," said Charlotte with a jerk, but very sleepily.

"Yes; there is a piquancy about goat's milk which requires a continental taste to appreciate it, perhaps. But how late you are," she broke out; "it's nine o'clock. We rarely, or never, were up after eight, abroad—seven hours' travelling, seven hours' sight-seeing, and a little time for meals. (John groaned.) Oh, we never stinted ourselves, I assure you; we almost always had one good meal in the day; didn't we, Charlotte? There, she's asleep. I've got so much to tell you to-morrow. *Buono notti*, as we used to say at Florence. *Gute nacht*. Good-night to you."

"Thank Heaven!" said Brother John with earnestness.

"Hi! there's no key to the door," holloed Clara presently over the banisters. "I can't sleep without a key, ever since that adventure we had among the Euganean Hills, on the road from Padua to——. Oh, never mind, thank you; Charlotte has found our door-fastener; we never travelled without it when we were in the——"

"Shut the door!" roared Brother John; and I cut short the reminiscence accordingly.

It was pitch dark when I was awakened by my brother's getting up in the next room. I heard him take down the sword that hung over his mantelpiece, and knew at once that there were robbers in the house. I was too terrified to articulate, but I got out and bolted the door. Presently he went down very cautiously, and immediately afterwards there was a dreadful scream. He had come suddenly with his night-cap and his sabre upon Clara and Charlotte, who, having been accustomed to rise regularly at four o'clock, in order to pursue their journeys, could not now rest in bed after that hour, and were reading by the moderator lamp in the drawing-room. Though the room had not been touched, of course, and everything was in the last stage of discomfort and disarray, they did not seem to mind it in the least. "La, bless me, John," I could hear Clara cry, "how you did make me jump! Well, I dare say you English people do think us strange; but you don't know what you lose by getting up so late."

"Late! why it's the middle of the night, woman," said John.

"Bless you, no; it's long past four. Oh, don't mind; we're quite used to seeing people in dishabille: how queer you look, though, with that thing tied under your chin. Now, you won't believe it, but at Venice I wore just such a thing as that, with a mask for the face besides, on account of the mosquitoes; but we could never keep them off. It was rather interesting to watch them thrusting their delicate little proboscides, like stings——"

Here my brother ran up stairs three steps at a time, slammed to his door, and tossed and tumbled upon his bed, as though he were at Venice himself, until it was really morning.

Directly after breakfast—during which we had a few passing observations upon the Campagna, the Engadine, and the Dardanelles, which seemed to escape less by the opening of

any particular value than through the absence of any sort of plug whatever—Brother John rode off to Stapleton to fetch Dr. Bland. He is the cleverest person about Riversmeet, by far the best read and the most anxious for information ; and John thought he would be a sort of conductor to Cousin Clara, who had evidently a huge mass of intelligence to let off still. He offered to pay the doctor just the same as for his professional services, if he would consent to remain at the Fishery until Clara should go, which she had promised to do upon the fourth day. In the meantime, poor Riversmeet and I suffered terribly. I took the two travellers to every spot which I thought interesting, and each reminded them of another spot which was twice as good : the Ivy Bridge was condemned by a comparison with that of the St. Gothard Pass ; Lillie's Leap was likened to some place upon the Rhine, where another young lady had committed a much more determined suicide ; and as for our little town, what was it to Interlaken ? All these home beauties, which were once so dear to me, are now inseparably associated with unseen, perhaps imaginary, splendours, before which they pale and shrink. Beside our little mountain tarn, I dream of Como ; and when I look up to our church's oaken roof, I sigh for the Vatican.

My brother brought his prize, the doctor, home with him to dinner, and the campaign, as I expected, was opened with the soup tureen.

"These beautiful Devon scenes," said Dr. Bland, must be a pleasant relief to you, Miss Clara, after the more brilliant pictures you have met with in foreign travel !"

"Ah, Sir," replied my cousin, with a pitying shake of her head, "you have evidently never been in the Tyrol."

"Nay," said he, "I am perfectly acquainted with every detail of that country. Does not this very spot remind you somewhat of the Valley of the Inn, near Innspruck ? What a charming convent that is of Landeck, which looks down upon just such a scene as the Fishery looks at from below !"

"Well, perhaps it does," confessed Clara; "but then, how small, how confined!"

"Nay," urged Dr. Bland, "but I think a cabinet picture has its charms as well as a cartoon: Grassmere is, for instance, to the full as lovely as Lake Leman, and infinitely more complete. Must beauty, then, as well as grandeur, be always 10,000 feet above the sea? Look at Suss now, in the Engadine Oberland. You have not seen it? Ah, then, you have missed something indeed."

"I should like to see Suss exceedingly," said Brother John, rubbing his hands.

"To tell you the truth," resumed Clara (ratlifer vexed, I thought), "Italy, and more particularly Turkey, effaced a good deal of the Swiss scenery from our recollection."

"Indeed!" said the doctor, in a tone of curiosity, dangerous, as it seemed to me, in the extreme, "what places particularly struck you?"

"Well, the village of Rocca di Papa, for example, that is exceedingly wonderful, but out of the ordinary (stress upon this word) tourist's way."

"Oh yes; the little place at the foot of Mount Caro. Did you stay at the 'Sons of Italy' inn? and have the charming bow-windowed room over the river? Ah! that spot reminds me very much of Lynmouth, do you know; but it wants the sea, which makes Lynmouth finer."

"But, after all," resumed Cousin Clara, after a pause, "Italy has something soft and effeminate about it, which you must penetrate still more eastward to lose. Now, I suppose, Dr. Bland, you never got so far as the Temple of Ægina?"

"There are two," said the doctor. "Do you mean that in the Saronic Gulf, opposite Salamis? Ah! well, should you call that particularly magnificent? I know many spots in Great Britain grander than that, and equally lovely."

I confess I began to feel a good deal pleased. Brother John hung upon the doctor's words, as though a relation of foreign experiences was the subject that was dearest to him beneath

the sun. There was, too, I think, a sort of dull ray of satisfaction emanating from Charlotte, as though she had never seen her aunt catching a Tartar before. That persevering lady, however, was not going to be beaten, without another struggle. Constantinople—she called it Stamboul—was the very extremity of her travelling tether; and the time had now arrived to stake her all upon the chance of the doctor's wanderings not having extended quite so far. Like all travellers who tell tales, she would have much preferred relating them to stay-at-homes, just as Box in the play desires to fight only when he has made himself certain that Cox doesn't know how; if she could but get in an unknown land, the doctor would be as much at her mercy as we. We could see by her collected appearance that she was now about to dispute some last position with all the tenacity of despair.

"Well, Dr. Bland, there is a good deal in what you say; neither Greece nor Italy can be said to combine every excellence of natural scenery; it is reserved, I think, for Turkey, the garden of the world, to surpass all countries in that particular grace wherein each boasts."

"You don't say so. I should like to hear you speak of two or three of the more remarkable Turkish places, for I have but a very small experience of the empire of the Crescent myself."

"Well, then, I should say the finest spot in the world—(Cousin Clara kept her eye steadily fixed upon the doctor, and spoke very slowly)—in the whole world for scenery, is, without exception, Buyuk Tchekmedge, upon the Sea of Marmora. Its mosque, its minarets, its kiosk, I shall never forget them; shall you, Charlotte?"

"I'm sur I don no, auntie. Oh yes, I do—the cucumbers. You wouldn't get up there, you know, nor so much as look out of window."

"Pooh, pooh; I don't mean the eating. Do you remember the beautiful solemn burial-grounds and the——"

"Pardon me," interrupted the doctor, "I think you must mean Kutchuk Tchekmedge, not Buyuk Tchekmedge. I

know one as well as the other ; they are both pretty, but the former has the burial-grounds. The whole mere tourist —(the stress returned with interest)—part of Turkey is as familiar to me as that of France or Belgium, but I thought you might have seen some more of the Balkan than I. A walking tour over those mountains is the pleasantest thing one can imagine ; but mine was scarcely worth mentioning, it was so short. I know nothing like them in Europe, except the hills about Wastwater in Cumberland, which have nearly the same effects. Indeed, after all our toils, Miss Clara, we must agree, I fear, with our two untravelled friends here, that there is no place like home. From Switzerland, from Turkey, from Russia even—although there is a good deal of fine hill-scenery about the Don—I return to Stapleton and to Riversmeet, having found nowhere anything more charming.”

“ Thank you, doctor,” said Brother John, with fervour.

“ There’s a great deal in what you say, Sir,” said Cousin Clara, perfectly humbled.

She never used her memory, “ that tremendous engine of conversation,” despotically from that date ; and although we kept Dr. Bland in the house until the last, for fear of a relapse, his remedies were no longer found to be necessary. The moment she had gone, Brother John and I began to thank him warmly for his services. “ It was the luckiest thing in the world, doctor, that you happened to be a traveller ; we had not the least idea of it when we sent for you.”

“ No more had I,” said he, laughing in his queer silent way. “ I have never been out of England in my life, but I have read a good deal about foreign parts ; and if you really do want any ‘ mere tourist ’ information about them, I can lend you *the whole of Murray’s Handbooks*.”



MY FRIEND'S FRIEND.

NEXT to our friend's relatives—whom we never saw, and trust we never shall see—next to his father, who is a military person of distinguished appearance, and the most heroic character, and who ought to have been knighted by his sovereign; next to his mother, who is a woman of queenly dignity and a star in fashionable spheres; next to his brothers and sisters, who are all charming people, it seems, and possessed of the cardinal and other virtues, besides property in the Three per Cents; next to our friend's relatives, we repeat, of whom he is constantly relating some eulogistic and extraordinary anecdotes, we dislike, and are utterly weary of, our friend's friend.

If death were a likely thing to separate him from us, we should cordially wish that the family fault, after receiving all our friend's relatives, might have a spare corner comfortably filled up by our friend's friend also; but we are very well aware that we should not get rid of him by any such method. Anything like a happy release in the obituary sense is not to be expected of our friend's friend. Even in his ashes would not only live his wonted fires, but our

friend would probably take advantage of his decease to be the more commendatory and Boswellian. He would not edit his life and remains, and there have done with him, but he would go about like a walking cenotaph, celebrating to everybody, everywhere, the wonderful properties of his great departed. There would also be a sort of indelicacy in questioning the wisdom or virtue of the man, being dead, which we are certainly very far from feeling under the present circumstances. It is certainly better that he should live, but live as he shall do after the publication of this paper, attached to the dead walls in popular places, like carrion on a barn-door—pilloried in the largest type on every pillar—Our Friend's Friend !

If we could only get to know him personally, all would be well ; we would then either insist upon his retailing his own stories, boasting of his own achievements, and in every particular discharging the duties of his own trumpeter ; or—better still—we would pick a quarrel with him, engender a coolness, and decline to have his name mentioned in our presence so long as we live. Unfortunately, however, and singularly enough, mortal eye, save that of our friend, has (as far as we know) never yet seen his majestic proportions ; nor mortal ear, save that of our friend, yet listened to his fascinating tones. Copious extracts from his letters, indeed, are often read to us, exquisitely characteristic of him—radiant, as our friend says, of the graceful writer, but still they are not himself. If they were, we should not hesitate to affirm that our friend's friend was rather a dull person, rather a heavy person, and rather, in short, a person to be avoided than to be made into a Juggernaut idol, and drawn about with us for the indiscriminate crushing of our acquaintance. As it is, however, we miss certain things, it seems, which would more than redeem everything. We can have no idea of his surpassing eloquence, of his genial disposition, of his keen appreciation of humour (we are told), from his mere writings. Just to give us a feeble example, a shadow from the brilliancy of this first gift of

his, our friend recites a speech made by his terrible ally at the Grocers' Hall, perhaps, upon the late monetary crisis. If this does not seem to us to be of a nature to carry a listener off his feet, our friend is ready at once to take the blame upon himself; the manner, the air, the tones are wanting, which would have ravished eye and ear.

He regales us with such anecdotes illustrative of this unapproachable person as make him almost expire with laughter in the relation, but of which we ourselves cannot see the fun for the life of us; and telling him so without much ceremony we produce a quarrel. Otherwise (and we were delicate in this matter at first) he can scarcely be stopped in these biographical ana, nor is it of any use to suggest to him that we have heard any particular anecdote before, inasmuch as he has a score of others quite as long, and bearing equally well upon the matter in hand; it is better, rather, to suffer him to exhaust himself upon the most wearisome, from which he will sometimes drop off, after five-and-forty minutes or so, like a boa of another description, gorged.

If our friend's friend is a person of elevated position, and (which is not uncommon) has a title, or handle, to his name, the work which that handle is made to do is something astounding. The bucketfuls of aristocratic intelligence which are wound up by it, from the best sources, to sluice us with, whether he will or no, are countless; and while we drip from head to heel, and painfully shrink in our social dimensions under its influence, our friend will continue to play upon us without the least remorse, like some mad garden-engine, that has the end of its hose in the river.

Not only does our friend make light of us, his companions and associates, through the odious comparisons which he draws between us and the unknown, but the worth and wisdom of even public and renowned persons are made to pale before this star, of whose radiance we know nothing at all except by reflection.

It seems to be positively offensive to our friend to hear of

a cheap edition of the works of any author, and gall and wormwood to him to see them sold at the railway stations, while those of his own unappreciated favourite are left without a public, and even without a publisher.

"Why this person," cries our friend, denouncing some popular writer, "I know for a fact, is considered to be the dullest, by many degrees, of the literary club to which my friend and he both belong : he is only maudlin when he thinks he is sentimental ; he is never amusing save when he is intoxicated ; whereas, the man of whom I have so often spoken to you is rich in fancy, scintillating with wit, withering in sarcasm, and superhumanly keen in detecting the springs of human action. I don't profess to be a critic [he makes use of this phrase when he considers himself to be essentially infallible, and out of the sphere of human contradiction] ; but when it comes to conceding to a fellow like THAT [popular author] the title of a great writer, while such a sublime spirit [our friend's friend] is, on the other hand, seeking acceptance from the world in vain, it is time indeed for me to put in my protest." He is always putting in his protest on behalf of this unknown *protégé*. Our friend's friend happens, in the above instance, to be a novelist ; but he is oftentimes the greatest poet of the age (although the age is not aware of it) ; also a mechanist, and the original, though unacknowledged, inventor of the electric telegraph ; a painter, but who has a quarrel with the Royal Academy (who are jealous of him), and therefore does not exhibit ; an engineer, with a submarine tunnel to Sydney, upon paper, about the details of which (thank Heaven !) our friend is bound to secrecy ; and an officer in the Bengal army who has merited the Victoria Cross, without getting it, more than any other man in all India.

If our friend were not really our friend, and a person in every way admirable except for this one hallucination, we should entertain the most inimical feeling towards him. As it is, we cannot turn an altogether deaf ear to his detractors. It has been suggested to us, not without some colour of

probability, that this extreme partiality for an unrepresentable person may be assumed for reasons. May not this insensate praise for a being whom none can appreciate save oneself, be, after all, a safe form of self-laudation? Shall we boldly state our suspicions that the affection bestowed on our friend's friend by the proprietor is something like that which Mr. Punch, in the puppet-show, exhibits towards his inanimate spouse, when he takes her up in his arms and kisses her, the better to use her poor head as an instrument wherewith to knock down the clergyman?

There is still another solution of this mystery, but it is almost too terrible to write. It was uttered, probably, with bated breath, at some convivial meeting over which the shadow of our friend's friend had been cast, and of course after the departure of his reflector.

We will confine ourselves to saying that the same awful suggestion was once made in connection with the elucidation of another social problem of a similar nature, by Mrs. Betsey Prig, over pickled salmon, in the apartment of Mrs. Gamp, but in that case the elucidator was under the influence of spirits. If this be the very truth ; if our friend's friend have in reality no existence, except in the scheming brain of his confederate and originator, we have been victims indeed. He has taxed our belief, and imposed upon our credulity to a greater extent than any superstition of the darkest ages ever ventured upon with the most savage mind. His attributes, which have been of the most impossible kind, we have never so much as questioned ; his exploits, before which those of Munchausen pale, we have listened to, if not with entire faith, at least with courteous attention. When, years ago, we were told that our friend's friend was at once a practical Christian and a Palace Court attorney, we exhibited no distrust : when we were assured that he was a family man, living on three hundred a year, and yet keeping his carriage and pair without driving into debt, we only remarked that it deserved the name of Economy's Triumphal Car. What if we had been made to do all this, and more, by a creature of mythology,

a non-existence, a Mrs. Harris, of no parts and of no magnitude ! The idea is indeed humiliating. At all events, we hereby publish our protest against our friend's friend, whether he be in the spirit, or whether he be in the imagination only. When a man marries a living woman's daughter, he knows that the elder female will be henceforth his mother-in-law, and makes up his mind before-hand to resistance or to submission. The object—sometimes the person—of his antagonism is plain, and (generally) substantial, and he has seen it in all its length and breadth from the beginning.

Again,—to take a still stronger case,—when a gentleman marries a widow, he is aware that certain comparisons will be drawn at certain times from the silent tomb, and cast at him, decidedly to his disadvantage, from which it will be difficult, if not impossible, to shelter himself—spectral virtues, which no exorcism of his can ever lay. Still, he puts his head into a tangle of widows' weeds with his eyes open ; and, if the gods have not wished to ruin him and made him mad before-hand, he soon finds out how unpleasantly tight a matrimonial noose of that material can be drawn. In the choice of our friend, however, no foresight of this can be used, and therefore the strictest watch should be kept against his first introduction of that ghostly enemy *his* friend, of whom we have been thus discoursing. "Love me, love my dog," is a proverb whose meaning is understood well enough ; but it has never yet been applied in words to the human subject. As we say, 'Ware the dog ! so with ten times the reason should we write up at the entrance gate of our affections : "No admittance to our friend's friend : all applications to be made in person."



MRS. B.'S ALARMS.



RS. B. is my wife ; and her alarms are those produced by a delusion under which she labours, that there are assassins, gnomes, vampires, or what not in our house at night, and that it is my bounden duty to leave my bed at any hour or temperature, and to do battle with the same, in very inadequate apparel. The circumstances which attend Mrs. B.'s alarms are generally of the following kind. I am awakened by the mention of my baptismal name in that peculiar species of whisper which has something uncanny in its very nature, besides the dismal associations which belong to it, from the fact of its being used only in melodramas and sick-rooms.

"Henry, Henry, Henry."

How many times she had repeated this, I know not ; the sound falls on my ear like the lapping of a hundred waves, or as the "Robin Crusoe, Robin Crusoe," of the parrot smote upon the ear of the terrified islander of Defoe ; but at last I wake, to view, by the dim fire-light, this vision : Mrs. B. is sitting up beside me, in a listening attitude of the very intensest kind ; her nightcap (one with cherry-coloured ribbons, such as it can be no harm to speak about) is tucked back be-

hind either ear ; her hair—in paper—is rolled out of the way upon each side like a banner furled ; her eyes are rather wide open, and her mouth very much so ; her fingers would be held up to command attention, but that she is supporting herself in a somewhat absurd manner upon her hands.

“*Henry*, did you hear *that* ?”

“What, my love ?”

“That noise. There it is again ; there—*there*.”

The disturbance referred to is that caused by a mouse nibbling at the wainscot ; and I venture to say so much in a tone of the deepest conviction.

“No, no, *Henry* ; it’s not the least like that : it’s a file working at the bars of the pantry-window. I will stake my existence, *Henry*, that it is a file.”

Whenever my wife makes use of this particular form of words, I know that opposition is useless. I rise, therefore, and put on my slippers and dressing-gown. Mrs. B. refuses to let me have the candle, because she will die of terror if she is left alone without a light. She puts the poker into my hand, and with a gentle violence is about to expel me from the chamber, when a sudden thought strikes her.

“Stop a bit, *Henry*,” she exclaims, “until I have looked into the cupboards and places ;” which she proceeds to do most minutely, investigating even the short drawers of a foot and a half square. I am at length dismissed upon my perilous errand, and Mrs. B. locks and double-locks the door behind me with a celerity that almost catches my retreating garment. (My expedition therefore combines all the dangers of a sally, with the additional disadvantage of having my retreat into my own fortress cut off.) Thus cumbrously but ineffectually caparisoned, I perambulate the lower stories of the house in darkness, in search of the disturber of Mrs. B.’s repose, which, I am well convinced, is behind the wainscot of her own apartment, and nowhere else. The pantry, I need not say, is as silent as the grave, and about as cold. The great clock in the kitchen looks spectral enough by the light of the expiring embers, but there is nothing there with life

except black beetles, which crawl in countless numbers over my naked ankles. There is a noise in the cellar such as Mrs. B. would at once identify with the suppressed converse of anticipated burglars, but which I recognise in a moment as the dripping of the small-beer cask, whose tap is troubled with a nervous disorganisation of that kind. The dining-room is chill and cheerless : a ghostly arm-chair is doing the grim honours of the table to three other vacant seats, and dispensing hospitality in the shape of a mouldy orange and some biscuits, which I remember to have left in some disgust, about — Hark ! the clicking of a revolver ? No ; the warning of the great clock—one, two, three. . . . What a frightful noise it makes in the startled ear of night ! Twelve o'clock. I left this dining-room, then, but three hours and a half ago ; it certainly does not look like the same room now. The drawing-room is also far from wearing its usual snug and comfortable appearance. Could we possibly have all been sitting in the relative positions to one another which these chairs assume ? Or since we were there, has some spiritual company, with no eye for order left among them, taken advantage of the remains of our fire to hold a *reunion* ? They are here even at this moment perhaps, and their gentlemen have not yet come up from the dining-room. I shudder from head to foot, partly at the bare idea of such a thing, partly from the naked fact of my exceedingly unclothed condition. They do say that in the very passage which I have now to cross in order to get to Mrs. B. again, my great-grandfather “walks ;” in compensation, I suppose, for having been prevented by gout from taking that species of exercise while he was alive. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, I think, as I approach this spot ; but I do not say so, for I am well nigh speechless with the cold—yes, the cold : it is only my teeth that chatter. What a scream that was ! There it comes again, and there is no doubt this time as to who is the owner of that terrified voice. Mrs. B.’s alarms have evidently taken some other direction. “Henry, Henry,” she cries in tones

of a very tolerable pitch. A lady being in the case, I fly upon the wings of domestic love along the precincts sacred to the perambulations of my great-grandfather. I arrive at my wife's chamber ; the screams continue, but the door is locked.

"Open, open !" shout I. "What on earth is the matter ?"

There is silence : then a man's voice—that is to say, my wife's voice in imitation of a man's—replies in tones of indignant ferocity, to convey the idea of a life-preserver being under the pillow of the speaker, and ready to his hand : "Who are you—what do you want ?"

"You very silly woman," I answered ; not from unpoliteness, but because I find that that sort of language recovers and assures her of my identity better than any other—"why, it's I."

The door is then opened about six or seven inches, and I am admitted with all the precaution which attends the entrance of an ally into a besieged garrison.

Mrs. B., now leaning upon my shoulder, dissolves into copious tears, and points to the door communicating with my attiring-chamber.

"There's sur—sur—somebody been snoring in your dressing-room," she sobs, "all the time you were away."

This statement is a little too much for my sense of humour, and although sympathising very tenderly with poor Mrs. B., I cannot help bursting into a little roar of laughter. Laughter and fear are deadly enemies, and I can see at once that Mrs. B. is all the better for this explosion.

"Consider, my love," I reason—"consider the extreme improbability of a burglar or other nefarious person making such a use of the few precious hours of darkness as to go to sleep in them ! Why, too, should he take a bedstead without a mattress, which I believe is the case in this particular supposition of yours, when there were feather-beds unoccupied in other apartments ? Moreover, would not this be a still greater height of recklessness in such an individual, should he have a habit of snor—"

A slight noise in the dressing-room, occasioned by the

Venetian blind tapping against the window, here causes Mrs. B. to bury her head with extreme swiftness, ostrich-like, beneath the pillow, so that the peroration of my argument is lost upon her. I enter the suspected chamber—this time with a lighted candle—and find my trousers, with the boots in them, hanging over the bedside something after the manner of a drunken marauder, but nothing more. Neither is there anybody reposing under the shadow of my boot-tree upon the floor. All is peace there, and at sixes and sevens as I left it upon retiring—as I had hoped to rest.

Once more I stretch my chilled and tired limbs upon the couch ; sweet sleep once more begins to woo my eyelids, when “ Henry, Henry,” again dissolves the dim and half-formed dream.

“ Are you *certain*, Henry, that you looked in the shower-bath ? I am almost sure that I heard somebody pulling the string.”

No grounds, indeed, are too insufficient, no supposition too incompatible with reason for Mrs. B. to build her alarms upon. Sometimes, although we lodge upon the second story, she imagines that the window is being attempted ; sometimes, although the register may be down, she is confident that the chimney is being used as the means of ingress.

Once, when we happened to be in London—where she feels, however, a good deal safer than in the country—we had a real alarm, and Mrs. B., since I was suffering from a quinsy—contracted mainly by my being sent about the house o’ nights in the usual scanty drapery—had to be sworn in as her own special constable.

“ Henry, Henry,” she whispered upon this occasion, “ there’s a dreadful cat in the room.”

“ Pooh, pooh !” I gasped ; “ it’s only in the street ; I’ve heard the wretches. Perhaps they are on the tiles.”

“ No, Henry. There, I don’t want you to talk since it makes you cough ; only listen to me. What am I to do, Henry ? I’ll stake my existence that there’s a—— Ugh, what’s that ?”

And, indeed, some heavy body did there and then jump upon our bed, and off again, at my wife's interjection, with extreme agility. I thought Mrs. B. would have had a fit, but she didn't. She told me, dear soul, upon no account to venture into the cold with my bad throat. She would turn out the beast herself, singlehanded. We arranged that she was to take hold of my fingers, and retain them, until she reached the fireplace, where she would find a shovel or other offensive weapon fit for the occasion. During the progress of this expedition, however, so terrible a caterwauling broke forth, as it seemed, from the immediate neighbourhood of the fender, that my disconcerted helpmate made a most precipitate retreat. She managed after this mishap to procure a light, and by a circuitous route, constructed of tables and chairs, to avoid stepping upon the floor, Mrs. B. obtained the desired weapon. It was then much better than a play to behold that heroic woman defying grimalkin from her eminence, and to listen to the changeful dialogue which ensued between herself and that far from dumb, though inarticulately speaking animal.

"Puss, puss, pussy—poor pussy."

"Miau, miau, miau," was the linked shrillness, long drawn out, of the feline reply.

"Poor old puss, then, was it ill? Puss, puss. Henry, the horrid beast is going to fly at me! Whist, whist, cat."

"Ps-s-s-s, ps-s-s-s, miau; ps-s-s-s-s-s-s-s," replied the other, in a voice like fat in the fire.

"My dear love," cried I, almost suffocated with a combination of laughter and quinsy; "you have never opened the door; where is the poor thing to run to?"

Mrs. B. had all this time been exciting the bewildered animal to frenzy by her conversation and shovel, without giving it the opportunity to escape, which, as soon as offered, it took advantage of with an expression of savage impatience, partaking very closely indeed of the character of an oath.

This is, however, the sole instance of Mrs. B.'s having

ever taken it in hand to subdue her own alarms. It is I who, ever since her marriage, have done the duty, and more than the duty, of an efficient house-dog, which before that epoch, I understand, was wont to be discharged by one of her younger sisters. Not seldom, in these involuntary rounds of mine, I have become myself the cause of alarm or inconvenience to others. Our little foot-page, with a courage beyond his years, and a spirit worthy of a better cause, very nearly transfixed me with the kitchen-spit as I was trying, upon one occasion, the door of his own pantry. Upon another nocturnal expedition, I ran against a human body in the dark—that turned out to be my brother-in-law's, who was also in search of robbers—with a shock to both our nervous systems such as they have not yet recovered from. It fell to my lot, upon a third, to discover one of the rural police up in our attics, where, in spite of the increased powers lately granted to the county constabulary, I could scarcely think he was entitled to be. I once presented myself, an uninvited guest, at a select morning entertainment—it was at 1.30 A.M.—given by our hired London cook to nearly a dozen of her male and female friends. No wonder that Mrs. B. had “staked her existence” that night that she had heard the area gate “go.” When I consider the extremely free and unconstrained manner in which I was received, poker and all, by that assembly, my only surprise is that they did not signify their arrivals by double knocks at the front door.

On one memorable night, and on one only, have I found it necessary to use that formidable weapon which habit has rendered as familiar to my hand as its flower to that of the Queen of Clubs.

The gray of morning had just begun to steal into our bedchamber, when Mrs. B. ejaculated with unusual vigour : “Henry, Henry, they’re in the front drawing-room ; and they’ve just knocked down the parrot screen.”

“My love,” I was about to observe, “your imaginative powers have now arrived at the pitch of *clairvoyance*,” when

a noise from the room beneath us, as if all the fire-irons had gone off together with a bang, compelled me to acknowledge to myself at least that there was something in Mrs. B.'s alarms at last. I trod down stairs as noiselessly as I could, and in almost utter darkness. The drawing-room door was ajar, and through the crevice I could distinguish, despite the gloom, as many as three muffled figures. They were all of them in black clothing, and each wore over his face a mask of crape, fitting quite closely to his features. I had never been confronted by anything so dreadful before. Mrs. B. had cried "Wolf!" so often that I had almost ceased to believe in wolves of this description at all. Unused to personal combat, and embarrassed by the novel circumstances under which I found myself, I was standing undecided on the landing, when I caught that well-known whisper of "*Henry, Henry*," from the upper story. The burglars caught it also. They desisted from their occupation of examining the articles of *vertu* upon the chimney-piece, while their fiendish countenances relaxed into a hideous grin. One of them stole cautiously towards the door where I was standing. I hear his burglarious feet, I heard the "*Henry, Henry!*" still going on from above stairs; I heard my own heart pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat within me. It was one of those moments in which one lives a life. The head of the craped marauder was projected cautiously round the door, as if to listen. I poised my weapon, and brought it down with unerring aim upon his skull. He fell like a bullock beneath the axe; and I sped up to my bedchamber with all the noiselessness and celerity of a bird. It was I who locked the door this time, and piled the wash-hand-stand, two band-boxes, and a chair against it with the speed of lightning.

Was Mrs. B. out of her mind with terror that at such an hour as that she should indulge in a paroxysm of mirth?

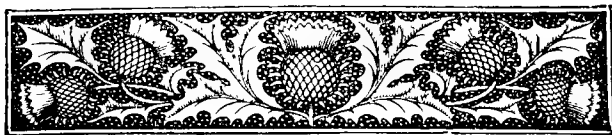
"Good Heavens!" I cried, "be calm, my love; there are burglars in the house at last."

“My dear Henry,” she answered, laughing so that the tears quite stood in her eyes, “I am very sorry I tried to call you back. But when I sent you down stairs, I quite forgot that this was the morning upon which I had ordered the sweeps!”

One of those gentlemen was at that moment lying underneath with his skull fractured, and it cost me fifteen pounds to get it mended, besides the expense of a new drawing-room carpet.

It is but fair to state the primary cause to which all Mrs. B.’s alarms, and, by consequence, my own little personal inconveniences, are mainly owing. Mrs. B.’s mamma was one of the last admirers of the “Old Manor House” and “Mysteries of the Castle” school of literature, and her daughters were brought up in her own faith: that Mrs. Radcliffe was a painter of nature, as it appears on earth; and that Mr. Matthew Lewis had been let into the great secret of what was going on—as they say at St. Stephen’s—“in another place.” So nervous, indeed, did my respected mother-in-law contrive to make herself throughout her lifetime, by the perusal of these her favourite books, that it was rumoured that she married each of her four husbands at least as much from a disinclination to be without a protector during the long watches of the night, as from any other cause. Mrs. B. herself was haunted in her earlier years with the very unpleasant notion that she was what I believe the Germans call a *doppelgänger*: that there was a duplicate of her going about the world at the same time; and that some day or other—or night—they would have a distressing meeting. And, moreover, at last they did so, and in the following manner:—Her mamma was residing for a few days at Keswick, supping full of horrors in the German division of the late Mr. Southey’s library every evening, and enjoying herself, doubtless, after her own peculiar fashion, when she suddenly felt ill, or thought she was falling, and sent a post-chaise, express, to fetch her daughter (Mrs. B.), who happened to be staying at that time with some friends at

Penrith. The long mountain road was then by no means a good one ; and it may be easily imagined that nothing but filial duty would have induced my *doppelgänger* to have started upon such a journey at dusk—although it was sure to be a fine moonlight night—and alone. Mrs. B., however, being warm and comfortable, went off to sleep very soon. like any boulder, nor did she wake until the chaise had skirted Ullswater, and was within a few miles of home. She had looked carefully under both seats, and even into the side pockets of the carriage, before starting, to make sure that there was no other passenger : and yet there was now a form sitting upon the opposite cushions—a female form, muffled up in much clothing, but with a face pale in the moonlight, with eyes half shut, yet with a look of haggard meaning in them, steadily fixed upon her own. It was herself ! It was Mrs. B.'s double ! The dreadful hour was come. The poor girl closed her eyelids to keep off the horrid sight, and tried to reason with herself upon the impossibility of the thing being really there, but in vain. She had been thoroughly awake, she was sure ; the vision was not the offspring of a distempered brain, for she felt collected, and even almost calm. Venturing to steal another look at it, there it still sat, peering with half-shut eyes into her face with the same curious anxiety as before. Not even when they rambled over Keswick stones, nor until she felt herself being lifted out in the post-boy's arms, did she trust herself to look forth again. The carriage she had just quitted was empty. "There was something sitting there, man," said she solemnly, pointing to the vacant cushion. "Yes, Miss," replied he, pointing to a huge package on the ground beside them ; "I promised to bring it on for a poor man, a cabinet-maker at Pooley Bridge, and seeing you were asleep when we stopped there, I made bold to put it upon the opposite seat. I hope it did not inconvenience you, Miss. It was only a looking-glass ; and as I know pretty young ladies don't object to seeing themselves in looking-glasses, I turned its face towards *you*."



AMALEK DAGON.



EXT to the inexpressible privilege of belonging to the best circles oneself, must be certainly ranked that of being connected with those that do belong to it. If we are not the rose ourselves, at least let us get as near to that flower as possible, that, when we return to baser company, we may with truth have something to congratulate ourselves upon. My rose is Sir John Aighton, Baronet, or, as I feel myself sometimes justified in calling him, Cousin Jack. A man who has dined with no less a person than our Sovereign Lady the Queen. A man who is on the committee of the Rhadamanthus Club, and the third best whist-player in Britain. I except, of course, Field-Marshal Bang, whose fame is more than European, and Lord Charles Five-to-two, who is known to have never missed a trump since he was of the age of thirteen. Sir John, Sirs (I am addressing myself to the concentrated public), was at Cremorne, you may take your oath, when the nobs alone had the run of those premises, and when you rang the bell and clamoured at the gate so loudly without the smallest attention being paid to you. He was in the dock of docks, the innermost sanctum of Cherbourg, when you and

your House of Commons were tossing about, half smothered and wholly sick, outside the breakwater. He sits in the duke's box at Goodwood, when you think yourselves happy in being in the grand-stand at all. He never had to wait—as the French king nearly had to do—in all his life save once (an occasion which he speaks of with a manly resignation), when he permitted the Prince Consort to have the *pas* of him. And no mortal eye has ever seen him run or hurry himself.

I cannot positively affirm that Cousin Jack never saw a copper in his existence, but I am perfectly certain that he never took one into his elaborate hands, to the pruning and adorning of which, by-the-bye, he devotes several ingenious silver instruments.

When he leaves Pall Mall, it is to hunt at Bister ; when he forsakes his native land, it is to start for Norway in his private schooner-yacht.

I was extremely surprised to see him in town the other day, at a time when, according to his own confession, there was “not a single soul in all London ;” by which he meant, of course, no denizen of its upper circles.

“Well, Harry,” cried he, extending three lavender-coloured fingers, in lieu of the customary pair, “have you half an hour or so to spare in the service of a blood relation ?”

I replied, and very truly, that I always had half an hour, or half a day for that matter, at his complete disposal whenever he desired my company.

“Very well,” answered he, with a frankness that became him charmingly, “I’m exceedingly glad of it, for I hate walking alone, and there’s nobody else to walk with. We will go together and see Dagon.”

“And who is Dagon ?” enquired I, not without a sense of shameful ignorance.

“Why, Amy Dagon, of course,” retorted he, sharply ; “who else should it be ?”

“Thank you,” responded I, disengaging my arm from his with a certain virtuous violence, “my wife wouldn’t like it

if she heard of it. In short, you're a man about town, and I'm not, and I would rather not see her, whoever she is."

I really did not believe that it was possible for anybody reared in the best circles to laugh as the baronet laughed at this reply. I don't think anybody ever saw him with tears in his eyes before.

"It's a man," he cried, as soon as he found breath to speak; "it's Amalek Dagon; and do you really mean to tell me that you never heard of the great Dagon before?"

"Never," said I, "never, upon my word, except as a heathen god."

Cousin Jack looked down upon me—he has a way of doing that, although I am taller than he—with an expression as if he was contemplating some rare and curious zoological specimen.

"Come along," exclaimed he, "come along. I would not have missed this for a couple of ponies. Have you ever chanced to catch the name of Palmerston, or of Betting Davis, or of the Tipton Slasher? Indeed! Well, I'm astonished to hear it. This is Trafalgar Square, and that is the National Cruet-stand, and now you shall see another British institution, who is quite as well known in town as they."

We turned into the Strand, and rang at the private door of a house of genteel appearance. A tidy-looking servant-girl answered the summons, but requested us to give our names before informing us whether her master was at home.

Having carried the baronet's card up stairs, she returned immediately, and ushered us into a room on the first floor, plainly but handsomely furnished. A short and rather vulgar-looking person, but perfectly well-dressed, rose from the sofa, at our entrance, and put aside a sporting paper that he had been reading.

"How are you, Dagon?" said my cousin, nodding carelessly; "I have brought a friend of mine to look at you, who has never heard of your existence before."

The little man smiled in a somewhat sinister manner, but professed himself charmed at making the acquaintance of any friend of Sir John's.

"What is your last achievement, Amy?" enquired my cousin, with the air of a man who asks for information for somebody else. "Anything about you in *Bell*?"

"An account of a neat little thing we did upon the Eastern Counties last week; that's all; a mere trifle, but rather laughable, too."

"Go on; tell it, Dagon," said my cousin, yawning unpolitely, "it's sure to be news to him!"

"Well, Sir," replied the little man, addressing himself to me, "there has been a good deal of picking up, you must know, on that line of railway lately."

"Shares improving," interrupted I, innocently; "ah! so I've heard."

Mr. Amalek Dagon looked interrogatively towards my cousin, as though he would say, "Can this ridiculous ignorance be actually *bonâ fide*, or is it affected?"

Sir John Aighton, Baronet, indulged in a roar of laughter which would have done honour to a coalheaver.

"No, Sir," replied the little man, softly, again addressing himself to me, "I did not exactly allude to the shares; I meant the sharpers. The card-sharpers and the thimble-riggers have been doing a great stroke of business upon that line, of late, particularly upon the Cambridge gentlemen. A young fellow-commoner, son of General Blazes,—whom you know, Sir John,—came to me only the other day, about his family watch and other matters, which he had made over to them; the money was gone, of course, beyond recovery, and we had a great deal of difficulty even about the ticker. You see, they're an exceedingly low set of practitioners, these thimble people; quite pettifoggers, Sir, with little or no connection among respectable persons."

"I should imagine that was the case with most of that sort of gentry," observed I, "except, perhaps, an involuntary connection with the police."

Here Mr. Dagon gave a sort of forbearing smile, which could scarcely be called appreciatory.

"So," he continued, "I determined to put these public nuisances down. I took a place in company with three young gentlemen of my acquaintance, from the Shoreditch Station to Cambridge, and two of the parties for whom I was in search, got into the same carriage. They had not much luggage beside a small carpet-bag, but within that there were three stout sticks, and a round piece of wood, out of which they ingeniously constructed a table to play at cards upon. When we four, who seemed to be all strangers to each other, declined to join in the amusement, they showed themselves desirous of conforming to our fastidious tastes by producing three thimbles and a pea. It's the simplest game to look at, as you may have observed, but I should recommend you not to play at it in a mixed company. I warned my young friends not to do so upon this occasion, but they persisted, and they accordingly lost their money—one sovereign, two sovereigns, a five-pound note, went very rapidly into the pockets of the individuals who handled those simple domestic implements. Presently one of the losers got so excited that he offered to lay twenty-five pounds upon the next event.

"‘Now hands off,’ cried he, ‘I’ll bet that the pea is not under either of these two thimbles,’—and, lifting them, he verified his statement, ‘therefore I need not say that it must of course be under the third.’

"The two men protested that this was not a fair way of winning the wager, but my three young friends got so excited as to protest that they would throw the others out of the window unless the money was paid ; which at last it was. For my part, I rather took the side of the sharpers in this dispute, although I observed that the words in which the bet was made, could be of no consequence with two gentlemen such as, it was easy to see, they were. ‘I myself,’ said I, ‘if I ever did make a bet, would name the very thimble under which the pea was hidden, for fifty pounds ; the thing being to me as plain as daylight.’

"The two proprietors of the table contradicted this so warmly, and derided my judgment so contemptuously, that I was actually induced to lay the money.

"‘This,’ said I, then, their hands being withdrawn from the board, ‘is the thimble under which the pea is hidden.’

"‘You bet fifty pounds on that,’ cried they, excitedly.

"‘Done!’ replied I, lifting the thimble. ‘Here is the pea; and there,’ continued I, lifting the others very swiftly, ‘there is no pea, as I told you.’

"All that they had won, and all that they had had originally in their own possession, was scarcely enough to defray this second debt of honour which they had thus incurred. They got out, short of their stopping-place, at the very next station; and they will not, I think, trouble the Eastern Counties passengers again for some considerable time."

"And how in the world," enquired I, "did you manage to win that money?"

"Why, you see," replied Mr. Dagon, with an ingenuous air, "these gentlemen were accustomed to withdraw the pea altogether during their manipulation, so that nobody could possibly pitch upon the covering thimble. In order to evade which difficulty, I took the precaution of taking a pea of my own, with which, by a little sleight of hand, I supplied the deficiency."

When my admiration at this device had been sufficiently expressed, my Cousin Jack entered upon an explanation of the business which had brought him to the retreat of Mr. Amalek Dagon.

"You see, Amy, I was obliged to come up to town about another matter; but, finding myself there, I could not go away without getting you to clear up a certain mystery which has puzzled us down in Warwickshire greatly. And this is it: Stuart and Ross (both of the Rhadamanthus Club), and myself, have been staying together for a few weeks at Leamington, and were at one time sadly in want of a fourth man: neither the points nor the play of those we met with suited us; or rather, they did not suit Stuart, who will never sit

down twice with any man who has lost him a trick. At last a stranger appeared at our hotel, who turned out to be just such a performer as we wanted. Only he won thirteen hundred pounds of us in six days. Now, you know my play well enough; that of my two friends is scarcely inferior. I want to know, therefore, who was the man who could so spoil us, and how he effected it."

"You are quite sure it was a strange gentleman who really won the money?" enquired Mr. Dagon, quietly.

"Quite sure," replied my cousin, laughing, and without the least trace of annoyance, "you are right enough to be suspicious (for such things are not unknown even at the Rhadamanthus), but you are a little over sharp this time."

"Then the fourth person," said Mr. Dagon, thoughtfully, "must have had hazel eyes, and a pair of very beautiful hands. He also had a trick of twitching his upper lip, which is a very foolish habit indeed for any gentleman who does not wish to be recognised."

"That's the man, Sir," cried my cousin, with evident satisfaction, "who did three of the best whist-players in England out of thirteen hundred pounds in a week."

"Well, Sir John," repeated the other, coolly, "and I know no man who deserves to have won it more than he—Charley Ledger, as hard-working, painstaking a young fellow, mind you, as ever breathed. A lad who has improved his natural gifts (and what a touch that fellow was born with!) as I believe, to the very utmost. He allotted two of the best and pleasantest years of his life—when other young men are but too apt to give themselves up to vice and dissipation—entirely to the perfection of that art that has cost you so dear."

"It must have been very high art indeed that could have protected his fingers," observed my cousin, "from three such pairs of eyes as he had upon them."

"It was," answered Mr. Dagon, enthusiastically; "Charley Ledger, absolutely cannot himself discover, by vision, when he is in the act of transposition. The way in which he

legged you was this. As soon as he got a pack of cards into his possession, he set a finger-nail mark in the left-hand corner of the back of each court-card, so minute as not to be seen by the naked eye, and only to be felt by his own miraculous sense of touch. Whenever he dealt, his practised thumb recognised unerringly these indentations, and at once by sleight of hand gave his adversary the next card but one, instead of the honour which belonged to him by right. He might have given him an honour also, it is true, but the odds, of course, were upon the whole immensely in Charley's favour. It must have been he, for there is no other man in England, save himself, who can be certain of doing that trick."

"Thank you," said my cousin, rising, "I thought you would be able to tell me all about the gentleman. Have you any more questions, Harry, to put to the great Dagon, before you depart into the realms of Ignorance?"

"I want to know," said I, "what Mr. Dagon means by saying that his young friend could not even catch himself when he was cheating."

"Oh," said the little man, good-naturedly, "that is very easily explained. You see, Mr. Ledger applied himself to this difficult study of his for at least two years : in the latter portion of his probationary time he was accustomed to sit opposite a looking-glass ; nor did he venture to practise his profession, and take in the public, until he was unable to perceive his own agile transpositions in the mirror—that is to say, until he could take in himself."



JONES'S GREATNESS.

MY friend Jones started in life with the intention of achieving greatness, adhered steadily to that determination throughout, and at length, it is almost needless to say, was successful.

Mankind, who flatter success even more than they hate it, are in the habit of assigning to the gainers of it a reputation for genius, talent, or shrewdness ; whereas what is far more requisite (except in rare instances) to its attainment, is self-denial—that is to say, the subordination, from the very beginning, of all other pursuits to the proposed end. This is easier with some than with others, of course ; but it can be done by almost all. Who can doubt but that any human male creature, coming naked into the world, and living seventy years in it with his mind fixed on the acquisition of money, will die with at least his *plum* ! Getting as largely as possible, but despising no gain however small ; spending as sparsely as he can ; with eyes ever alive to the gleam of gold ; with hands greedy to clutch, tenacious to hold—such a man may have had, indeed, to sacrifice all that is best in this life ; may have lived without love in the world, and died having made a friend of neither God nor

man ; but he will have made (in compensation) his plum, or even his *ten* plums, his million of money. "And a very pretty sum, Sir," as has been before observed, "to begin the next world with, too." Whether it is possible that such a one may have been a fool after all, is a question, which, to some minds, would seem next kin to irreverent, considering the amount of money acquired ; but he needs not certainly to be considered a wise man.

Similarly, although less easily, considerable distinction besides this one of mere wealth can be obtained in many walks, by diligent application and concentration of all faculties to the one object. The enquiry to be made upon setting out, however, is but too apt to be delayed until it is too late—namely, "Will it, after all, be worth my while?" I, for my part, have no experience of the matter to place at the disposal of the public ; but I behold Jones's greatness, and that is sufficient for me.

Have you ever watched a persevering parrot climbing painfully up the outside of his gilded cage, never advancing one perpendicular inch but by a wearisome, tentative process of beak and claw ; and at last, having reached the ring at the summit, have you seen him swaying himself backwards and forwards in a self-congratulatory manner, and yet not looking altogether comfortable in his mind, even then? Whether it is that, Alexander-like, he regrets that there is nothing more to conquer, that he can get no higher ; or whether he would really feel safer if he were at the bottom again, which, as he well knows, he can never more regain except by the headforward method, I do not know ; but the general expression of his features, in spite of his gorgeous attire and exalted position, is certainly not a happy one. And I cannot conceal from myself that his case finds something like a parallel in that of the greatness of Jones.

In the next edition of "The Boyhood of Great Men," that of my friend will, doubtless, be chronicled, and I do not intend to dull the edge of its interest by any anticipation. I will merely state, that as, on the one hand, he did not dis-

tinguish himself in athletic sports, on account of that early application to the pursuit of his greatness at which I have already hinted ; so, on the other hand, he was not a notorious "muff" or "spoon." Throughout his life, indeed, he has been a quiet, well-behaved person, almost necessarily debarred from the extravagances and follies of his contemporaries, and if remarkable at all, remarkable for his noiseless unobtrusiveness. What has been reported of him, therefore, since his distinguished elevation, is, as will be seen, the more extraordinary and unaccountable. He went to bed upon a certain night, a hard-working, deserving person in good repute ; he awoke in the morning, and found himself a public character, and infamous.

Jones is a painter, and his last picture was announced by the Thunderer and all its Echoes as being a credit to any age and any country. "It was Michael Angelesque," said some ; "It would have been so," said others, "but for its decidedly Claudian character." It was the picture of the year, and for all time ; and if only the colours were durable, he might be certain that mankind would not willingly let it die—— *But*, the very next day, poor Jones had tears in his eyes on account of what was the talk of the studios, concerning his atrocious conduct to the model of his Iphigenia ; and on the second morning it got into the newspapers, and came to the angry eyes of Mrs. Jones. Moreover, it then appeared that he had not in reality painted any of the pictures which were attributed to him, but had kept a colour-mixer, of very great talents, at half-a-crown a week, to do them for him, who was bound over to that service, by a legal document, for a very long series of years. He had picked the poor fellow up in the humblest circumstances ; observed, with a vulture eye, his extraordinary gifts ; and from that moment had battered upon his unlucky brains in the above unprecedented manner.

Or my friend Jones, the subtle lawyer, but heretofore obscure, except among the profession, has just been appointed Lord Chief-justice of the Common Pleas. "A fitting capital

to a life-long pillar of legal devotion," say the judicial organs, becoming almost poetical in their enthusiasm. "The right man in the right place," as is admitted by all who were not expectant of the high office in question for themselves.

"But how sad it is," says Rumour, gravely shaking its innumerable heads, "to think that, in early life, this man should have stolen a horse!" It turns out also, that there are two clients of his, formerly in affluent circumstances, and to whom he introduced himself, it seems, without the medium of an attorney, who are now beggars, Sir—beggars. His persuasive talents were indeed at all times very remarkable. His clerk (who is poorly clad, and not well fed) is equally wicked, but not equally successful; and if either of them chose to tell tales, it is said, they could hang one another. Moreover, it is probable that the truth will, some day, out, since everybody knows they both—motion as of turning a liqueur glass bottom upwards—to excess.

Or my friend Jones is a divine, and attains very wide celebrity for pulpit eloquence. His sermons, in their third extensive edition, combine the most fervid eloquence with the truest teaching; possess a rare and genuine vein of the most liberal charity, and exhibit an array of learning, modestly indicated in their foot-notes, which is an honour to the church which hails him as her son.

"The greater the pity, therefore," sighs Universal Report, "that the reverend gentleman should be unable to write except under the direct influence of opium." Although that circumstance is, after all, of the less consequence, since it is alleged that he buys his discourses at an establishment in Cheapside, long famous for its possession of a certain theological writer, who, but that he prefers to sweep a cross-ing, and cannot be kept from drink, might be Archbishop of Canterbury. With such strict ultra-Anglican views, also, as Jones professes to have, so as to oppose himself even to the marriage of the priesthood, what a very queer story that seems to be about his *niece*! Having been himself, too, an only child, and consequently without brother or sister, the relation-

ship does look a little ill-chosen, certainly. The idea of his having had his gown taken away from him so lately as 1852, seems almost as strange as the reason for it—duelling. The report, however, that he killed his man, is inaccurate; he only *winged* the gallant captain.

Or my friend Jones is a physician of most meritorious character, who has done more towards the mitigation of pain, perhaps, than any man in his generation. A doer of numberless unknown acts of good, a beneficent apostle of healing, and an unadvertised Blessing to Mothers.

How unaccountable it is, then, that such a person should not appreciate the value of a moral character! It is more than hinted that, when he has a mind, Dr. Jones will do almost as much harm as good, and is not always such a blessing to husbands as he is to mothers. He could not, clearly, have been thinking of his professional business when he (accidentally, of course) gave poor Sir Joseph Green Belladonna instead of Balm Tea. How such matters manage to get hushed up in the medical profession is very remarkable. He visits, however, good Lady Green as usual, who has forgiven him his little mistake in a truly Christian spirit. Being so generous, as some would have one believe, it seems inconsistent that the brown footman who shows you into his sanctum happens to be his father, who thereby prevents the bribes paid for early admission to the popular physician's presence from going out of the family. His grandfather, who is still alive (though in pitiably indigent circumstances), would doubtless have had an appointment of a similar nature, but that he is unfortunately a man of colour, and was formerly a slave in Carolina.

Or my friend Jones is a comic actor of such intense humour, that he cannot appear upon the stage without one roar of laughter from boxes, pit, and gallery. Nor, indeed, for low broad farce is there a man to touch him upon the British stage.

And yet, do you know, the private peculiarity of poor Jones is melancholy! Deep-seated, continuous, and funereal

gloom ! He may die any moment with that disease of the heart he has, and is especially liable to such an accident when singing, which perilous performance he has (poor fellow) to go through every night of his life. Although a player by profession, he is by conviction a strict Calvinist. It is said he learned his most telling laugh of a donkey looking over a village pond in Essex, and that he instantly killed the too talented quadruped with a pointed stick, lest it should ever give the idea to another person. It is also worthy of mention, that although we always see him as the grave-digger, his own impression is that he acts Hamlet, and solemn characters generally, better than any tragedian dead or alive.

Or, lastly, my friend Jones is an author of acknowledged genius, whose books have the healthiest of circulations from the most natural causes. The delightful pathos of his writings, as you may read as you run in the daily press, "is enriched by the highest religious principles ;" while his touches of nature are such as to have brought tears, on more than one occasion, even into the eye of a publisher.

But, alas, what hypocrisy is so great as that of the writer of fiction ? It is but too well understood that Jones is at heart an atheist, and opposed to the celebration of the Sabbath. His private life, it is alleged, is of a character to make Nero blush, and Heliogabalus hide his imperial but less profligate head. With regard to his popularity, there is, some say, a sect in the City, who, despising all legitimate objects of veneration, have deified Jones, and worship him ; although others assert that this is but an exaggerated account of a convivial ciub of which he is the founder. His great original talents are acknowledged, but it is a curious, though perhaps an undesigned coincidence, that his productions are all built upon plots the property of an obscure French novelist of the last century ; while his dialogues present a marked similarity to those of Richardson, Smollett, Fielding, Sterne, and several others. Although not much *à propos* to this subject, it may be mentioned, as a noteworthy circumstance, that Jones is

probably the only man now living in this country who is afflicted with the leprosy ; on account of which misfortune he is obliged to perpetually wear gloves, and a velvet mask with metal springs.

My poor friend Jones's greatness having, in a word, so many drawbacks, I have never much envied Jones. Whether I ever possessed the talents, virtues, self-denial, or what you will, to achieve his eminence, had I desired it, is an open question, of which the world takes one side, and I the other. At all events, I am content with my lot. I prefer to paint portraits from ten shillings upwards ; to pick up my guinea in the courts when opportunity and an attorney offer : to preach to a congregation which has never yet requested me to publish my sermons : to practise physic without a brougham : to consider the second comic countryman a good part, and one which exhibits my talents sufficiently : or to write anonymously, as now, and never to wed my name with immortal title-pages. When *I* ride into the lists of fame, like my friend Jones, with visor up, the good time will have arrived, which has been so long in coming, when greatness ceases to have its libels as well as its privileges.





THE MARKER.



I AM a billiard-marker in the Quadrant. If a man can say a bitterer thing than that of another, I shall be obliged to him if he will mention it, as I shall then have a higher opinion of my profession than before. Everybody else seems to be making capital of their experiences, and why should not I? I see a great deal of what is called life, up in this second story, and why should I not describe it? I am sure I have plenty of spare time. I have been here long enough to become unconscious of the roar of foot and wheel that rises from the street below; neither is there anything in the apartment itself to distract my attention much; no literature, save an illustrated edition of Allsopp's advertisements hung all round the walls, and a statement—which I know to be a lie—in seven colours, about the best cigars in London; no pictures, besides a representation of Mr. Kentfield, which I hope for that gentleman's sake is not a correct one. He has one or both of his hips out, and is striking a ball in one direction while his eyes are steadily fixed in another. Of furniture, there is an immense oblong table with a white sheet upon it, one rickety chair, high-cushioned forms around the room, a rack for the public cues, two painted

boards for marking at pool or billiards, a lucifer-match box over the mantelpiece, and spittoons. The atmosphere is at all times chalky. In the evening, cigars and beer and gas make continually their fresh and fresh exhalations, but in the morning their combined aroma is stale. I feel when I first come in as if I were drinking the beer that has been left all night in the glasses, and endeavouring to smoke the scattered ends of the cigars. I sit upon the rickety chair with the rest in my hand, and my head beneath the marking-board—sometimes for hours—waiting for people to come. I arrive about twelve o'clock, and there is rarely anyone to play before the afternoon. Yes, there is one person—Mr. Crimp. I call him, and everybody calls him, and he calls himself, Captain Crimp, but I now exhibit him in plain deal, without that varnish of his own applying. His step is not a careless one, but he whistles a jovial tune as he comes up stairs, until he finds I am alone, when he leaves off at once, ungracefully ; first, however, he looks in the cupboard where the wash-hand-stand is kept, remarking, “ Oh ! ” regularly every morning, as though he did it by mistake ; and, finding nobody there, he proceeds to business.

Mr. Crimp assists me with his own scrupulously-clean hands in removing the white cloth, and immediately becomes my pupil. I have taught him several skilful strokes at different times, which his admiration for the science of the game leads him to reward me for, quite munificently. Curiously enough, there is also an understood condition that I should say nothing about this. Later in the day, and when the company has arrived, it often happens that he will get a little money on, and accomplish those feats himself. A certain winning hazard in a corner pocket, which appears particularly simple, I am now instructing him to *miss*—so that his ball may go round all the cushions and perform its original mission at last. It seems a round-about method enough of accomplishing its object, but it will have its uses for the captain, I have no doubt. His interest in the game extends even to the condition of the table itself. He knows how the elastic sides are

affected by a change of weather, and he prefers the right-hand middle pocket, for choice, to play at—it draws. Our lesson commonly lasts about an hour, unless we are interrupted. I have another occasional pupil in young Mr. Tavish. He learns billiards as he would languages or dancing; but he will never do much at it. His attitudes, however, are after the very best models; and when he has made a fluke, he can look as if he intended it better than any man—a property in all situations of life not a little useful. Mr. Tavish is the pink of fashionable perfection; and, with every garment which he takes off for convenience of play, discloses some new wonder. Two buckles, besides ribands and an India-rubber band, are employed in fastening his waistcoat; his worked suspenders have a hundred loops; his miraculous collar has no visible means of entrance; his tie appears to be a thin strip of sticking-plaster; his new and patent leather boots are patched at the toes and punctured in little holes most marvellously. I actually have observed him trying to look at himself in the pool-board. Between two and four come our chance customers, who are the most interesting to me, and of a very various sort.

A couple of brothers who have not met for years, and who are about to part, perhaps for ever—one just returned from the Crimea and the other on the point of starting for India. They talk of their past adventures as they play—of their future prospects, of their respective sweethearts, of their home—for nobody minds a billiard-marker—as though they were quite alone.

A father with his grown-up son will knock the balls about for half an hour, to see if he retains his ancient skill, dilating all the while on mortgages, on the necessity of a rich wife, and on the young man's allowance, and compressing the Chesterfield Letters into a fifty game. Now and then comes a parson, who looks into the cupboard, just as Mr. Crimp did, for fear that his diocesan should be in hiding there.

Two university men, who are up in town for a week's lark, but are supposed (I hear) by sanguine friends to be at college,

reading at that present ; their talk is of the boats, the proc-tors, the tripos, and of the man who went to the bad.

Sometimes—for I was not born into the world a billiard-marker—these topics touch me nearly. What does it matter ? I am here ; and, whether through my own bad play, or an unlucky fluke, it is now all one ; my mission is to mark, not moralise.

After four, drop in the pool-players : five or six habitués and a few strangers. Some of them gentlemen, but the majority, evident “legs”—quiet, resolute-looking fellows, with hard keen eyes ; abstemious moral persons, with iron nerves, and perfectly heartless, who live by this particular pastime. They would win the last half-crown of the player before them, although they knew the loss would insure his immediate suicide. They would remark, after he had drowned himself, that he had taken to the water. From the prosecution of this game for eight hours daily, their view of life has been formed ; it is one gigantic pool to them, wherein every man’s hand is against the other’s, and the misfortune of one makes all the rest happy. Each has a little sort of coffin, locked, which holds his particular cue. He looks along this weapon carefully, to make certain of its straightness, rubs the thin end with scouring-paper, and chalks the top with his own private chalk, of which he carries a piece about with him, in his waistcoat pocket, everywhere. From the time when I have given out the balls to the last stroke which wins, or divides the pool, these men maintain an almost unbroken silence. No judge in delivery of a death-doom, no priest in the celebration of religious rites, could be graver or more solemn than they. My “Blue on yellow, brown your player,” and “Red on white, yellow in hand,” break forth amidst the hush, like minute-guns during a burial at sea ; the click of the balls, the whiz when one is forced into a pocket, are the only other sounds. Many of our visitors in the midday ask for lunch, which is invariably toasted cheese ; but these night-birds, with the exception of a little beer and tobacco-smoke, suffer nothing to pass their lips. Sometimes, amidst those solemn

scoundrels there appears a jovial face—a naval man on leave, perhaps, or somebody who is really a little screwed, and creates a disturbance : laughing and singing, putting the best off their play, and endangering the wariest by his mad strokes. Mr. Crimp looks on those occasions, as though, being hungry, some one had come between him and his dinner ; and I observe his lips to move silently—I do not think in prayer. There is a pretty constant attendant here, a Mr. Scurry, who is, I know, his special aversion. This gentleman comes for no earthly purpose but to amuse himself, and with his spirits always at high pressure. He makes puns, and uses ready-made ones, about everything connected with the game. He is come, he states, on entrance, “To plunge in the quiet pool.” “Consider yourself, captain,” said he, yesterday, while he held that instrument over Mr. Crimp, “under a rest.” “No rest for the guilty,” is his quotation whenever that is called for. He calls the cues that have lost their top-leathers, “ex-cues.” You can imagine what a range such a man finds in “stars” and “lives ;” how the church and army are each laid under contribution for his remarks on “canons ;” how “misses” and “kisses” are remarked upon. If the red ball is kissed, he remarks, on each occasion, “No wonder she blushes.” And all this waggishness of his is the more creditable, inasmuch as he might just as well whisper it into one of the pockets, as impart it to his company with any hope whatever of appreciation. He does not want that ; it is merely that he has an exuberance of merriment, and must let it off somehow : which is to the others generally an awful crime, and beyond their experience. Mr. Scurry gives me a shilling now and then, as do many of the earlier visitors. I have also my rewards from Mr. Crimp ; and I am not, besides, ill-paid. It is not of the hardships of my profession that I have to complain (though I am up always until three in the morning, with the thermometer for the last six hours at about eighty), so much as of its unsocial character ; nobody trusts me ; nobody interests himself in me in the least, or considers me as anything beyond a peripatetic convenience

for getting at your ball when it is out of reach. Nobody ever gets familiar with me, except Mr. Crimp, and I am the dumb witness, daily, of innumerable frauds.

I know the real skill of every player to a hair, and how much he conceals of it. I think I may say, from long habit of observation, that I know the characters of nine-tenths of the men who enter this room ; and if I do, some of them are exceedingly bad characters. The calm dead hand at a hazard, whom nothing disturbs from his aim ; the man who plays for a stroke only when it is a certainty, preferring his own safety to his enemy's danger ; the hard hitter, from whom no player is secure ; the man who is always calling his own strokes flukes ; the man who is always calling other people's by that derogatory name ; and the poor fellow who is for ever under the cushion. My world, which is not a small one, is mapped out for me, with all its different species of men, upon this table ; for I stand apart and mark many things beside the score,





HOW JONES GOT THE ENGLISH VERSE MEDAL.

MY name is Herbert Brown, and my calling and profession is that of a maker of poems ; however incredible it may appear to mere money-spinners and prosaic persons of all sorts, I am perfectly convinced that I was born for that express end and object, and any attempt at persuading me to the contrary will be thrown away. I don't flatter myself that I am a bit of a poet ; I don't consider that I have a very pretty talent for making verses ; I don't amuse myself in my leisure hours with culling a chaplet for my brows from Olympus' top, and wooing the bashful muse ; I cannot find words to express my contempt for any such practices ; of all idiots the sentimental idiot being to me the most abhorrent.

I am accustomed to drink vast quantities of bitter beer during composition, and my favourite supper is toasted cheese with onions. I think Shakespeare was the greatest stunner who ever breathed, and I am happy to believe that when he met the late Mr. Bowdler in Hades, he punched the head of him for presuming to meddle with his original text ; that he gave him one for his nob for each impertinent and unnecessary elimination. I think it would have done Mr. Words-

worth all the good in the world to have got what Burns calls fou at least once in every three weeks of his poetic career. I go in for nature and high spirits. The thoughts which I think I am used to express as well as I am able, instead of employing every artifice to conceal them, and of playing a sort of graceful-hide-and-seek with the unhappy reader. Do not suppose, when I say that I despise the metaphysical and spasmodic poets, that I admire Byron; because I don't at all. But for his frightful vice, he seems to me as *whine-and-watery*, and complainingly egotistic, as any of them, and if he had chanced to have been born an actor instead of a lord, we should never have heard the last of that smell of the footlights which pervades him. I go in for sunshine and fresh air. However, in spite of his bad grammar, one discovers easily enough what Byron means. This is also the case with the poetry of Herbert Brown, or I am much mistaken. I go in for Saxon and sense, and clearness of thought, and that is why I lost the Chancellor's Medal for English Verse at the university; or rather, Jones, with all his glittering verbiage, is obscure and afflicts the reader with vertigo, and that—as you shall hear—is why he gained it.

There is always a great competition for the English verse-prize. The classical men write for it, after the same style in which they do their Greek and Latin verses, with pretty good metre, but with a great insufficiency of ideas. The mathematical men, too, are excited, in no small numbers, by the unnatural ambition; but most of them are stopped by the first couplet, and subside into blank verse, which is looked upon by the examiners with great disfavour. All the idle literary and fast intellectual men are also candidates for the laurel, and they gain it, as may be expected, at least as often as any other class. It is almost the only university distinction which can be attained, as the classic phrase runs, without “sweating” for it, and your gin-punch-and-Shelley undergraduate is, to say truth, not much inclined to laborious application. Though there are, perhaps, in reality more competitors for this prize than any other, in appearance there

are very few ; scarcely any, where all must fail save one, will own to writing for it ; and many are downright ashamed of the imputation of making poems (although they secretly pride themselves upon the fancied gift beyond measure), and so deny the soft impeachment, as being too soft to be confessed. I never denied it. As soon as the subject—The Aurora Borealis—was given out, I immediately announced my intention of becoming a candidate ; and my friends (I say it to their credit), who believed in me almost as much as I believed in myself, disseminated the information. Jones, too, to do him justice, was not wanting in self-confidence, although he pusillanimously declined to take my five dozen of bottled porter to two, which I had offered upon my chance against his.

It was curious to remark how the Aurora Borealis pervaded university talk during that term ; how the north pole thrust itself into general conversation, and the Esquimaux obtained a social footing in undergraduate circles. Tangent of John's, a man who was spoken as embryo Smith's prizeman, but who was not a good hand at rhyming, went about complaining to his friends that he could not get anything to chime with walrus ; his poem, he said, was perfect, except in this one particular, which was, however, of the greatest importance, because he had caused his hero to be attacked by that Arctic monster. I supplied him with this couplet :

“ Storm and iceberg, bear and walrus,
Combined to make his prospects dol'rous ; ”

for which he thanked me heartily, and stuck it amongst his heroic verses, just as it was.

Now, the examiners for the English verse prize were three.

One. The vice-chancellor for that year, who was not thought very highly of as an intellectual person, but who made up in obstinacy for what he wanted in wits, and was, therefore, highly respected and seldom opposed.

Two. A mathematical professor, who was accustomed to amuse himself in leisure moments with making artificial suns,

as good, and almost as large, as the real one ; and whose modesty was such as to have once caused him to observe, that he was not a conceited man by any means, but still that he knew everything (if he were not mistaken) except how to play on the violin.

Three. A classical professor, who had passed five-and-thirty years of his life in the study of the Greek particles, and who maintained with pride that he had not mastered their astonishing subtlety of meaning even yet.

The vice was not only incompetent to write what was worth reading (although he had written a good deal in his time), but also what could be read at all. His handwriting was the wanderings of a centipede who had just escaped from the ink-pot, and had crawled and sprawled over the paper. It was, therefore, arranged that he, who had the privilege of reading the poems first, should signify his approbation or disapproval by one simple letter *g* for good, or *b* for bad, and not venture upon giving a written opinion. He then impressed upon his two coadjutors the necessity of their being impartial, and quite independent of his opinion, in such a manner, that they both retired from the presence secretly determined to agree with his high mightiness at all hazards.

This may seem a little hard upon the two professors ; but, if I spoke of them as strictly honest, it must be at the expense of their wisdom,—and where are the professors who would not rather be accounted wise than held immaculate ? It is also impossible for me to forget that it was these two misguided men who did in fact award the chancellor's medal to Jones.

All the manuscripts arrived at the appointed time at the vice-chancellor's, neatly folded up and sealed, each with its motto, as though it were a pastrycook's kiss : three-and-forty *Palmam-qui-meruit-ferats*, and thirteen quotations culled from the Latin grammar, besides all the beautifully appropriate superscriptions of the classical men, whose poetic merits upon these occasions are a good deal concentrated in the

motatoes. The vice-chancellor must have had a very fearful time of it for the next three nights, if he really did read those various effusions ; they do say he got his butler to help him ; but the thing occurred long since, and it is well to let by-gones be by-gones. If he really did read them, I repeat, it is a wonder he did not die of Aurora Borealis. However, he finished his work at last somehow or other, and sent the terrible epics on (by cart) to No. Two.

Now, the mathematical professor was a mistaken man in being so convinced that he knew everything except how to play on the violin. He knew nothing whatever of poetry. To him, as to a certain brother professor before him, it was all assertion without one word of proof. When he came to the manuscript marked *g* he opened it, with his mind half made up already. Although the dazzling no-meaningness of the author greatly puzzled him,—and how that Aurora Borealis did flash about Jones's poem !—yet, seeing within as without, the *g g g* occurring where the verses were, to him, even more incomprehensible than elsewhere, he quietly put his *g g g* opposite to the same places, deeming that the things, perhaps, were what people called poetic ideas, although with scorn in his mind.

There were no *g*'s, I am truly happy to say, about Herbert Brown's manuscript.

No. Three, on getting the cartful of epics in his turn, divorced his mind with pain from the Greek particles to give them his best attention, which, under the circumstances, was very good ; and, coming upon the vice-chancellor's *g*'s, endorsed with the *g*'s of No. Two, he at once concluded that Jones must needs be the man for the chancellor's medal ; while his own inability to understand him he set down to the same cause which rendered himself incapable of grappling with anything else—the particles ; his *g* was accordingly inscribed opposite to the others, making an array of approbation triply strong for the fortunate Jones. That spasmodic and slightly incoherent young man, therefore, obtained the medal, and recited in the senate-house to a brilliant audience

of wondering, but fashionably attired ladies, his panegyric upon the Northern Lights, and Herbert Brown was nowhere.

When, however, the three examiners met at some social entertainment shortly afterwards, and the bonds of official reserve had got relaxed, the following conversation arose :—

“Why,” said the vice-chancellor to No. Three, “did you and your brother professor there put a *g* opposite to that insane epic of Mr. Jones’s?”

No. Three, who was as usual among the particles, had to disentangle himself before he could reply ; so No. Two anticipated him.

“Why, you put a *g* yourself, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, you know you did.”


“A *g*, Sir? Pooh, Sir,” responded that dignitary, in a contemptuous tone. “I thought it sheer madness. I put a *q*, Sir—a *q* for query ; meaning that I could not for the life of me understand what the young man meant.”

And that was how Jones got the English verse-medal.





DOUBLE GLO'STER.

HO is it that stands godfather to the streets of London? Who is it that, in so many cases, in answer to the solemn question, "Name this street?" pronounces "Glo'ster, Glo'ster?" I suppose it is some assemblage, whose heads being laid together, are said to constitute a Board. A Board of Works, is it? Good. Then all I have to say with respect to that august body is this: that it is not a Board of Works of the Imagination. Its total want of originality in nomenclature is most remarkable. Albert, Victoria, Glo'ster, Stanley, but above all GLO'STER, form its round of ideas. Not less signal is its perfect indifference to the suitability of the second word or noun — Street and Place are with it convertible terms. A short cross-street gets the name of Road equally with a great outlet from town. Most of its Terraces are double-rowed streets running up-hill. After all, I am not sure if I should not retract the charge of want of imagination; for in some of these misapplications there is a comic character, which, if designed, would argue considerable powers in that special line.

The great mystery, however, is as to the prevalence of

Glo'ster. We have Glo'ster Everything and everywhere. Why must there be in every *province* of London a full suit of Glo'sters—Street, Place, Crescent, Terrace, Road—when a variation of Cheshire or even Stilton, would be so refreshing? Now, who is this imbecile who is thus permitted to confer street immortality? Is his own name Glo'ster? Is he a native of Gloucester or Glo'ster, eager to honour the place of his birth? Or does the repetition of the word spring from some special devotion of his for a defunct member of the royal family? If the first, may her Gracious Majesty the Queen be pleased to listen to the prayer of a thousand householders, and grant him permission to assume, by letters patent, the names and arms (all the public-houses are called *Glo'ster Arms*) of Montmorenci, or anything else. If the second, let Gloucester do her duty, and fetch her devoted son from London, creating him town-councillor, mayor, beadle, or what she will; he has made himself ridiculous enough, I am sure, to have merited the very highest civic honours that any town can bestow. If the third, let him temper his loyalty with discretion, for he loves not wisely but too well; the Duke of Gloucester, while he lived, was a most innocent prince: why, being dead, should he be made thus offensive?

The writer of this brief but fervid paper is one of his many victims. I live in one of his double Glo'sters, and suffer accordingly. Tired and exhausted, I leave the House of Lords, or Commons, after a prolonged debate; or the City, after a financial meeting of partners; or the law courts, after a wearisome lunacy case; or Messrs. Gimp and Sarcenet's, after eleven hours' work as "manager"—for what matters *my* social status, since there is no position in life unrepresented in one or other of the Glo'sters—and crawling into a cab, I mutter my direction, and fall asleep. I am awakened by the stoppage of the hansom in a totally unknown region; the Princess of China could scarcely have been more shocked and astonished upon finding herself in the apartment of Prince Camaralzaman.

"Now *then*, Sir; what's your number?" asks the impatient hariatocr.

I lift the little trap-door, and enter into controversy. "My good man, what *is* this place? I want to go to (very distinctly) Gloucester Crescent."

"Well, and aint this here *one on 'em*?"

It is the story of the chameleon over again; I am right, but so also the cabman. Nothing, therefore, remains but to try another "on 'em." By keeping my eyes about me, and my finger on the trap-door, I may now possibly arrive, as it were by telegraph, at my right destination; but should I once relapse into fancied security, I get into another region of double Glo'sters, and all the work has to be done over again. The imbecile therefore (to whom I do not wish to apply any severer epithet) *defrauds* me of a part of twenty pounds a year of unnecessary cab-hire. He does not actually get the money, it is true, but it is so much tribute paid to his inordinate egotism.

I have not a very high opinion of his sagacity, and even think it quite probable that he may be returned to Hanwell every afternoon as soon as the business of the Board is finished; but I do not believe he is *so* idiotic as to live in Glo'ster anything himself. One's own messages, and visitors, and parcels, and tradespeople are generally numerous enough in London, but they only form one-half of the bell-pullers of a double Glo'ster establishment. "Oh, I thought you was *N.W.*," is considered to be an ample excuse for bringing our Alphonso from his pantry to the front door to take in a penny newspaper with politics which are abhorrent to my feelings, but which delight some rabid democrat who resides under the shadow of the Coliseum. "We're *W.*, *stoopid*," returns our Buttons gloomily, for these continual mistakes have affected even his once exuberant spirits.

"Is this here Glo'ster *Terriss*?" enquires another misguided wanderer in a minute or two.

Our page does not deign to answer in words; but making a circular movement with his arm to represent a crescent,

and pointing to the corner of the opposite house, on which *Gloucester Crescent* is displayed in enormous characters, he sardonically dismisses the enquirer.

Butter, intended for I know not whom, grows rancid in this establishment, while waiting for the legitimate owners to send for it ; game becomes uncommonly high ; the moth even gets into new but unclaimed clothes, which have been left at the door without remark by whistling tailor-boys. There is a certain cupboard into which all this double Glo'ster property is thrust, and waits till called for. A less rigidly scrupulous man than I might clothe and feed himself and family quite gratuitously out of the heterogeneous stock. Alas for our fallen nature, this is the true reason, perhaps, that the imbecile has been so long permitted to call all things Glo'ster without remonstrance. One-fourth of the human race (or nearly so) are concerned in the matter, and a large proportion of these are probably rogues. And yet the dishonest must themselves suffer something in their turn. It is very nice to get other people's turbot and lobster sauce ; but when other people get *ours*, and we happen to have friends to dine that day, the mistake is robbed of half its charm. To have one's little bills sent in to one's neighbour instead of one's self, is a very soothing circumstance ; but when the cheque for our quarter's salary goes astray, it depresses one's spirits.

I have borne these things long and patiently, in common with a quarter of a million (or so) of my fellow-creatures ; but there is a limit to all endurance. The trodden worm, if you tread upon him with hobnails, will turn ; and hobnails have been employed with a vengeance in the case of the present writer. Not content with their double and treble Glo'sters, the Board of Works has christened, or permitted to be christened, a street in our immediate neighbourhood by the name of *Gloucester Crescent North*. The original imbecile must have been egged on to this piece of egregious folly by some new hand ; his unassisted intellect could scarcely have devised so ingenious a method of confusion.

Some practical joker, I repeat, must have got admitted to the Board of late years, and perpetrated the Gloucester Crescent North ; for *imprimis*, it is not a crescent at all, but a straight street ; and, secondly, it does not happen to be north of us, but west. One-half of this anomalous erection does, I believe, refuse to be designated by so inappropriate a name, and calls itself a square ; but with that piece of harmless eccentricity I have nothing to do, since it does not call itself Glo'ster. It is with the other half that my unappeasable quarrel lies. Its inhabitants absorb every description of alien property, from fire-guards to American goloshes. Nothing comes amiss to their felonious appetites, from Turkeys sent to us from the country, to bonbons for our Christmas trees. On the other hand, we are most unfortunate in the things we get in exchange. For a whole fortnight, I partook regularly of a medicine, the only effect of which was to turn my complexion to a light blue, whereas the tonic which was applicable to *my* little derangement was imposed upon some one suffering some horrible complaint in Gloucester Crescent North ; the numbers of our respective houses being identical, and the chemist having confounded the crescents.

Again, in consequence of the great system of true merit rewarded being as yet unestablished in this sublunary sphere, I do not happen to keep a carriage, but hire a brougham upon those occasions when society demands that my wife should perform the great social paper-hunt—that is, drive about leaving cards. Now, with each new brougham there is a new driver ; and each new driver, by some demoniacal instinct, drives to the house which corresponds to ours in Gloucester Crescent *North*. Opposite that door he sits for hours, nodding and blinking as only coachmen can ; while up in her own drawing-room, in most magnificent apparel, sits my wife, waiting in vain for him to come. The individual who suffers for this sort of thing in the end is, as every paterfamilias knows, the husband, who receives no inconsiderable portion of those remonstrances—let us call them

—which are properly the due of the Board of Works and its imbecile. On the other hand, persons of both sexes, and all heights of fashion, are constantly being shown up to our first floor, where, after being received with silent courtesy, they sit expectant for twenty minutes or so, and then enquire whether Mrs. X. (a totally unknown lady) will soon be down or no?

I will conclude with a fearful example of this class of incident, wherein the mistake was gigantic in its proportions, and the circumstances weird and unnatural in the highest degree.

It was about half-past six on a very stormy day in January last; my wife and I were alone in the drawing-room, waiting for our *tête-à-tête* dinner to be announced. I had my slippers on, and all things portended a domestic evening. I hugged myself, as the hail dashed against the windows, that there was no occasion for patent-leather boots and company-manners for that night, at all events.

But there came a double knock at the door.

“Goodness gracious!” cried my wife, rising and mechanically arranging her hair in the pier glass, “who on earth can that be?”

“Gloucester Crescent North people, of course,” said I, yawning: “that makes the seventh mistake since I came back from the City.”

“Hush!” replied she; “they are actually coming up stairs.”

At the same moment that the cab drove rapidly away (it *was* a cab, for I heard its windows rattle), the door was opened, and a male and female entered in the fullest evening costume. They were good-humoured elderly people, very pleasant to look upon, but it was the first time that we had ever set eyes on them.

“We thought that we never *should* have found you out,” exclaimed the lady, beamingly; “why, we’re half an hour late for dinner, are we not? But we quite forgot the number, and you being new-comers, why, your address was not in the Red Book.”

They shook hands so heartily with us both, that we could

not but return their salutation with some warmth ; and as for any explanation, the old lady never gave us a chance of putting in a syllable edgeways.

" I suppose, my love, you scarcely recollect me at all ? " pursued she, chucking my wife under the chin ; " you were such a little thing when I saw you last—not *that* high ; and as for your husband—such a beard as he's got too !—why the very last time I met him, I dandled him on my lap, and gave him a Noah's Ark. He's got just the same eyes, however, as he used to have, the very image of his poor mother's ; but his hair has grown darker, and has lost a little bit of its curl. Law, Harry [my wife's name *was* Harriet], you should have seen him in his little black velvet frock and red ribbons, with his fat little arms and legs quite——"

At this point in the reminiscence, I fell into such a paroxysm of laughter that I did not catch the remainder of it. The old gentleman, who stood with his back to the fire, as if the house was his own, rattling the silver in his breeches pocket, laughed very heartily also, although it must have been at something different.

" I see," continued the old lady, " that he is just as lazy, however, as he used to be—naughty boy to wear slippers ; why do you let him do it, Harriet ? Not that *we* care, you know ; for, indeed, you said that you would be quite in the family way ; but being London, why, we thought it better to dress. What a nice little drawing-room you've got ! "

" I am glad you like it, my dear Madam," said I, bowing.

" Madam ! " echoed she ; " well, I never heard of such a thing. Why, you used to call me Sukey—your own dear Auntie Sukey—although, of course, I was not your auntie at all."

" No," assented I ; " of course not."

" Harriet will not mind your calling me Aunt Susan now, I dare say ; will you, my dear ? "

" Certainly not," replied my wife (who has a sense of humour quite uncommon in a female), and down whose cheeks the tears were rolling in hysterical merriment.

" Now, I dare say we country people amuse you im-

mensely," pursued the old lady, laughing; "we seem so droll, don't we?" [I nodded, for if I had attempted to have spoken, I should have perished of asphyxia.] "And yet, do you know, you seem to us almost as funny. I expected you to have kissed me. William expected Harriet would have kissed *him*. We were talking about it as we came along in the cab. Were we not, William?"

The old gentleman smiled more benignantly than ever, and rattled his money with increased enthusiasm.

"Shall dinner be served, Ma'am?" enquired Alphonso, putting his face in at the door with a grin on it.

There was a moment of painful indecision, which was luckily put an end to by the old lady herself. "Oh, I do hope you are expecting nobody else," said she; "it is so much better to have you all alone like this."

"There's nobody else coming," returned I. "Alphonso, you knew that there were not more than four to-night. Let us have dinner at once."

"And mind you put the cold roast-beef on the sideboard," added my wife in a whisper.

It would have been a most unchristian thing to have turned these good people out of doors dinnerless, and without a chance of discovering the young couple to whom they were evidently so tenderly attached; so I took the cheery old lady's arm, and led her down stairs, while my wife brought up the rear with the silent old gentleman. The fish consisted of a single sole, at the sight of which I trembled with dismay, but it only drew from our female guest an exclamation of delight.

"It is *such* a pleasure," exclaimed she, "to see that you have made no strangers of us."

There was fortunately a quantity of pea-soup, to which my wife and I exclusively confined ourselves, affirming it to be our favourite food, and there afterwards appeared a fowl, whose appearance reminded me of an ancient song, which seemed as if it had been prophetically written with a view to our present circumstances—

"Fowl's small, as everybody knows—
'Twas never meant for more than two ;
A brace of hungry folks pop in ;
Why, *Who'd ha' thought of seeing you ?*"

But here the cold roast-beef proved more than a *pièce de résistance* ; it brought us off with flying colours. As for the sweets, we had a cook that we could trust for extemporising those. "If this was a feast, I had been at many," as the Scotch proverb goes, but it really was not so skimpy an affair as it looks in print. I heard my wife give a thankful rejoinder to my grace after meat in the shape of a sigh that seemed to say—"Thank Heaven, there *was* enough then ;" but, upon the whole, all was well.

I was presently left alone with my unknown and speechless guest. The door had hardly closed before he drew his chair near to mine, and observed in a solemn tone, "And now, George, how *is* our poor Elizabeth ?"

It was evident that he had been reticent throughout the evening with the thought of this unfortunate lady overwhelming his mind ; there was a tenderness, which before I should scarcely have given him credit for possessing, in his manner, that gave unmistakable proof of the hold this subject had upon his heart. I had almost risen up and said, "I am a humbug ; I am imposing upon your simplicity. Let me send out and fetch a cab ;" but my courage failed me.

I said, "Thank you ; she is as well as can possibly be expected ;" which I thought would meet every emergency in which a female could be placed ; and I added, very solemnly, "But let us talk of her to-morrow—not to-night."

The old gentleman, whose eyes had fairly filled with tears, nodded his head several times, to express his content with this arrangement ; and having helped myself, and passed the claret, I drank to his very good health, and he drank to mine, after which he relapsed into silence, and we had a very pleasant evening.

Up stairs, all went on quite as satisfactorily, for the old lady did all the talking, and if she did ask a question, an-

swered it herself in the same breath. As she left the drawing-room for the cab which Alphonso had been sent for, her last words were these :—

“You cannot think, George, how happy we are to have renewed our old friendship with yourself and your wife. We shall be here at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning without fail, for your uncle will be with us, so that we shall have no difficulty in finding you. Come, you may kiss an old woman like me, for the sake of auld lang syne. William, you kiss Harriet.”

In a couple of minutes the cab had rolled away with its nameless occupants, and we two were once more left alone together, mystified, wonder-stricken, kissed.

“Do you think that we have done right?” enquired my wife, with some little anxiety. “You have no idea what a confiding old lady that was. If we should have any children, she says she must certainly stand godmother to the first that comes. Only fancy if the twins up stairs had set up such a noise as they did last night !”

Again the absurdity of the whole transaction flashed upon me, in one broad sheet of vivid humour, and I laughed till I could laugh no longer.

“But do you think that we *have* been doing right?” repeated my wife.

“Perfectly right, my dear ; we have been acting a most Christian and hospitable part. To-morrow morning, the uncle will introduce them to the right people, and they will have a good laugh, and think us very pleasant folks. No inconvenience to either party can possibly— What’s this ?”

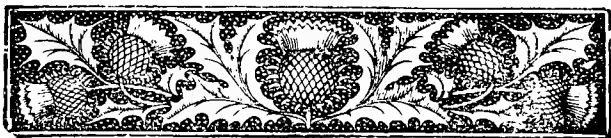
An open envelope was lying upon the mantelpiece before me, on which was hastily written in pencil, “For Elizabeth ;” and within it was a twenty-pound note.

That note is still in my possession, awaiting and likely to await its legitimate owner. All endeavours to ascertain who the nice old couple were have failed most signally. We only know that they had friends whom they did not know by sight,

in one of the double Gloucesters. My suspicions rest upon Gloucester Crescent, *North*, but only upon the general grounds that it gets us more into trouble, upon the whole, than all our other namesakes united.

At all events, the imbecile who ornaments the Board of Works has robbed "Elizabeth" of twenty pounds.





OUR BACK GARDEN.



WE married, just six years ago, upon less than the minimum income allowed by the *Times'* correspondents to be sufficient for a frugal young couple, and we are still in the flesh—and in a good deal of it. The bitterest cup which we have yet had to drain is that of Messrs. Bass and Company ; and I, for my part—and I think I may say the same, in a more mitigated sense, of Mrs. P.—have ever drained it cheerfully. Workhouse relief has not yet been applied for to meet any peculiar emergency in our domestic economy. The titled aristocracy of our native land do not, indeed, cultivate our personal friendship so much, perhaps, as we (especially Mrs. P.), at the time we were first united, anticipated ; but we are now content to believe that this is their loss rather than ours.

Still, it must be confessed, there are little unpleasanties inseparable from a little house and a little income which do not happen to my neighbour (in a very profane sense), the Duke of Bredlington. I allude more particularly to our back garden. It is probable that his grace is unacquainted with any such spot except through the medium of romance and poetry ; or, he may have heard the late Mr. Robson, of Wych

Street, London, inform an audience, with his accustomed precision, that the garden wherein Villikins met his Dinah was the *back* garden, and yet not have accurately realised what a back garden is. He may have imagined (I am speaking of his grace), as we did, a dainty piece of verdant lawn, set with parterres of flowers, with an arbour, perhaps, hung with honeysuckle, or other sweet smelling blossom of that nature ; with, maybe, a fishpond, or even an inexpensive fountain in the middle of it.

"Wherever we are," we thought, "no matter how humble the abode, let's have a dear little bit of garden at the back of the house."

Well, we have got our little bit of garden in that position, and decidedly a dear one. It is not exactly the spot we had pictured to ourselves in the way of seclusion, because all the back windows in our terrace and all the front ones in the next street command it. It does not possess any erection that can well be called an arbour. It has no fishpond ; nor fountains ; nor stalactite cave (which might just as well be expected as the other two) at the end or in any part of it. We attempted a great deal with it, at first, in floriculture ; but nothing ever came of that to speak of. Besides several daisies, quite a den of dandelions, and a handful of mustard-and-cress (with J. and A. P. in a cipher) under the north wall, there are but three marigolds, a crown imperial, and a very limited extent of mignonette. Vegetables will not grow in our back garden. Fruits would be sure to be feloniously abstracted before they could attain maturity. Grass only flourishes here and there (from motives which I do not understand), in minute green patches, and is scant and mangy everywhere else. In some places it is so short that it looks as if it had been mown (with a saw) only yesterday, in others, it is quite long enough to make very tolerable hay.

The proprietors of other back gardens in our vicinity seem aware, either from experience or instinct, that nothing can be made of these retreats, and leave them just as they find them. They call them with an honesty which we cannot yet quite

bring ourselves to emulate, back-greens ; as gardens, they bear, almost exclusively, clothes-props and empty bottles.

Upon our first coming into possession of our territory, we prided ourselves upon its having in it an elder-bush,—the only tree visible in the horizon ; but we now regret that circumstance. This shrub forms the natural staircase by which a thousand cats make, into our back garden, their exits and their entrances. It is the trysting-place of the young, the battle-field of the old, and the spot peculiarly devoted to their general refreshment ; for hither, as to a picnic, they each carry their peculiar delicacy, and never trouble themselves to clear away a single bone. Whether it is they who bring the spirit-bottles which we find there in the morning broken, or whether those are chucked over the wall by our neighbours, I do not rightly know ; but the drunken choruses which are unquestionably indulged in by our feline visitors, incline me to the former opinion. At all events, that back garden, in which we had placed such tender hopes, is rendered, by these various influences, the home of desolation and riot.

Our income being, as I have described, but limited, it behoves us much to practise economy, and my beloved wife is always striking out some new line of domestic conduct by which vast sums are to be saved. Many of these have appeared to me to be so unpromising that I have declined ever to give them a fair chance. It may have been cheaper—she said it *was*—to supply ourselves with pork without the intervention of a butcher (the hams we had bought, however, had all been failures, and not Westphalias either), but still I could not bring myself to keep a pig in our back garden ; and whatever quantity our child, a very thriving one, might require, of new milk, I was not going to undertake, in that extremely limited space, the sole management of a cow. Even fowls, although the price of a trussed chicken sometimes staggered me, I was determined not to maintain alive at the back of my house, to keep me up all night,—as they did some poultry proprietors in our neighbourhood, — watching over their personal safety with a blunderbuss.

However, opposed as I am to change, my better half, assisted by her unscrupulous ally, the cook, did persuade me once to deal no longer at the market, but with a peculiarly honest farmer, in a most picturesque part of the country, and where the air was especially adapted for the fattening of fowls. The birds were to come dead, but in their feathers, by a wonderfully cheap carrier's cart ; so that they would be delivered at our own door for almost nothing.

This scheme would, doubtless, have turned out admirably, but that the picturesque farm was such a long way off, and the wonderfully cheap carrier so slow in his movements, that the two couple of economical chickens would not stand the delay of transit, but made themselves offensive to the whole house. The cook persisted that they would still be very nice and tender in the eating, but it was with a faltering voice ; and she made no response to my challenge when I dared her to hang them up by their legs. They were very cheap at four-and-sixpence to *eat* (which was, indeed, at least eighteenpence lower than the trade price), but they were not cheap at any price (as I tried to explain to Mrs. P.) to bury in the back garden, which had to be done at once. I had nowhere else to put them, and therefore interred them in that spot by help of the dust-shovel, trusting never to see them more. Alas ! as in the case of Mr. Eugene Aram, my secret was one that earth refused to keep. Feline body-snatchers disinterred those four corpses during the night, and lo ! in the morning the ghastly fragments of bone and feather and skin and sinew were strewn over the whole of our back garden ! Nothing can be likened unto it, except the ravage which the vultures make in the Desert upon the victims of that wind which never blows anybody any good, the Simoom.

Notwithstanding the utter failure of our cheap chickens, I discovered one Saturday, from some snatches of conversation between my wife and the cook, as well as from a certain air of oppressive secrecy pervading the household, such as is apt to precede great events, that some culinary change was in contemplation.

"My dear," observed I, at once, with unwonted firmness, "I do trust there is nothing more coming by that carrier,"

"Nothing," she replied, with an air of triumph; "nothing that is of the nature which you imagine. Nothing that will spoil, my love; but something that will be, on the contrary, a delightful treat."

"It is not a fatted calf?" I enquired satirically; "nor, still more, a calf, alive and kicking, which I am expected to fatten, is it?"

"No," she said, changing colour a little, "it is not that. It is only a beautiful Michaelmas goose, fourteenpence cheaper than we can get it in the market, and an enormous bargain."

"It will make the house unbearable, as the others did," I cried in a passion; "we shall get indicted for a nuisance."

"It's a live goose," quoth Mrs. P., severely, "and just ready for killing."

"And where," enquired I, "in the name of common sense, are we to keep a live goose?"

"Why, of course, my dear," replied she, "it must be kept in the back garden."

This animal—this beast with a bill—in due course arrived; was uncartered in the passage, which is otherwise denominated the front-hall; and at once disengaging itself from the terrified domestic, took its way, with the most awful anserine imprecations, up stairs into the drawing-room. Never shall I forget the scene which ensued for the next ten minutes! that royal game of goose played out between us four and that dreadful bird: its malicious hisses; the long shrill gurgle in its throat. half gobble and half quack, so convincing of its relationship to duck and turkey; the agonised flapping of its short ungainly wings; even the thud of its naked webbed feet, as they ran over the keys of the piano, extorting undreamt-of harmonies. — will never be erased from my mind.

The carrier, incited by the reward of sixpence set upon the head of the fugitive, at last secured it, but not before it had done considerable damage, and bore it under his arm,

playing upon it as if it were an unsound bagpipe, into the place which had been assigned for its reception.

I watched it that night for hours, roaming up and down the walled back garden, and complaining to the stars; gazing up into the elder bush with an eye to its practicability as a means of egress, and shaking its goose's head with the melancholy of blank despair. When I saw it lie down to sleep under that tree, I also retired to my couch with a contented mind; for I knew well the cats would come at their accustomed hour. They did come. Never shall I lose the recollection of that shriek which rang out on the startled ear of night about one o'clock, and wakened every sleeper in the terrace. Our goose had been dreaming probably of home and peace and barley-meal, when she was roused to the awful sense of her real position: four and twenty cats at the very least, Toms and Thomasinas, tabbies and tortoiseshells, were standing around her in solemn conclave, doubtful whether she was alive or not, but certain that she was excellent eating; in another instant they were up the elder bush and scattered over all the back gardens under the sky. The outcry which the geese made who saved the Capitol, was nothing to the outcry which our goose made to save herself. The memory of it abode with her enemies long after her spirit had fled; for the cats did not return to their usual rendezvous for nearly a week.

The next day being Sunday, the captive was spared from destruction, and well fed with her favourite food at the cost of sixpence; twopence, therefore, setting aside the damage in the drawing-room, was, upon Monday morning, our total pecuniary saving through having purchased her alive.

"Cook," said I, authoritatively, "you must kill that bird at once, or it will be a positive loss to us."

"La, Sir, me kill it?" answered she; "I should be terrified out of my life."

"Who is to kill it, then?" I enquired, in unfeigned astonishment.

"Well, Sir, missus thought (you see the poulterer charges

eightpence for coming in and doing on it) as how you might be kind enough to kill it yourself."

The poulterer came and performed his savage office. The cook took half the day to pluck the corpse, and even then left so many feathers upon it that the dish looked more like a singed sheep's head than a roast goose. The tenant of our back garden cost us exactly sixpence more than if we had purchased it at the poulterer's in the first instance, and finally turned out to be as tough as a goose could be.

Since the decease of this leathery bird, our back garden has been left to its grass, its dandelions, its elder-bush, and its cats.





NO. 19, W.

THERE has been a good deal of talk lately about model lodging-houses for the lower classes ; but I think, for my part, charity should begin at home ; and that we should first get model lodging-houses for ourselves. Why are there no respectable furnished apartments in the whole of London where Mr. Poppet and I can afford to live upon our two or three hundred a year ? One first-floor sitting-room, and two tolerably large bedrooms (on account of the nurse and baby), with cooking and attendance, is what we wish we may get for about £7 a month in vain. Advertise ? Well, we *have* advertised, and with great success, numerically speaking, indeed. "All the comforts of a home," "cleanliness and attention," "no other lodgers in the house," "no extras," "a cab-stand opposite," "the gratuitous use of a piano," "draught beer over the way"—every allurements, in short, that fancy could suggest to the designing mind, has been offered to us for the above price, and lower ; but with what result ? We have spent the money, and more than the money, I do believe, in removals and compensations for removal.

Once we thought we had obtained a certain status in

society by taking apartments where there were 'two members of parliament on the second floor;' but these turned out to be Irish members, who occupied a double-bedded room immediately over our own chamber, and we had no rest for their Maynooth and similarly patriotic speeches for hours. "Sir-r-r-r," one would begin, "I came down to this House to-night with no intention of addressing it; but the tants that have been levelled at my beloved country, the first gem of the urth and first flower in the say," &c. ; after which the other honourable member would "follow," as he expressed it, "upon the same soide, in reply."

One little boy was retained all day in their sitting-room to take down their eloquence in shorthand; and "hear, hear," "chair, chair," "order, order," and "*Mister Spaker*" resounded over us continuously until the two senators went down in an omnibus together to serve up their *réchauffés* to "the House." The dining-room had been seized upon by two clerks in the City, under pretence of its not being wanted—although they paid only five shillings a week apiece for sleeping accommodation—and the third floor was the residence of three, and the habitual resort of four other medical students. These never came in till two o'clock in the morning, when they would usually insist upon having some hot supper, and come to the door of our apartment to borrow forks and glasses. Moreover, the domestic being fast asleep in some unknown region, Mr. Poppet had not seldom to go down and let them in, because they had a habit of dropping their latch-keys into the letter-box in their endeavours to open the door. Lastly, in the attic of this house was a clergyman, who had resided there for fifteen months without offering any remuneration whatever to the landlady: he, however, gave but little trouble, she said, made his own bed, and lived exclusively upon rolls and Bologna sausages—still it was very annoying. The place, notwithstanding, was not, I believe, more unsatisfactory than others; certainly not so bad as our apartments in Porchester Oblong, for instance, where the landlord and his wife played cards all day Sun-

day, being Jews, and their two female servants came up to me in a fainting condition, protesting that we did not leave enough provisions for their sustenance—they being made entirely dependent on the lodgers for support. It was upon this occasion that Mr. Poppet raised the standard of revolt. “You have had the choosing of our place of abode for the last two years, my love,” he said, “and I think I may say without contradiction, that you have chosen them excessively ill. No ; I don’t regard your going into hysterics in the least ; all I have to observe is, that in future *I* choose the lodgings.” And he took his hat up and went out upon that errand at once. It is unnecessary to relate here how he pitched upon an *entresol* in the Regent’s Quadrant, and paid two guineas deposit money for the same, and never took me even to look at it after all, in consequence of communications he received from bachelor friends ; or how he got a most excellent bargain of three sitting-rooms and as many bed-rooms in Allsop Paragon, where the landlord wore a peacock’s feather behind each of his ears, and went about the house crowing and flapping his arms : suffice it to say, that the residence Mr. Poppet chose at last was No. 19, W.

It was situated in a pretty fashionable street, running directly into Hyde Park, where first-floor apartments were, upon the average, three guineas a week. The drawing-room and back drawing-room of No. 19 were elegantly and expensively furnished ; the sleeping-rooms, though bare, were sufficiently large ; and the rent was only two guineas. Everything, however, was excessively dirty, including Mrs. A., the landlady. Her complexion was cream-colour, sprinkled with yellow spots ; her hair, which should have been gray, was white-brown ; and the hue of her gown quite indescribable : it neither reached high enough nor low enough, nor was it ever changed for another during our protracted residence in her apartments. My husband informed her that I was excessively particular about cleanliness, for which she expressed herself truly thankful ; “for, Sir, I do assure you, with *me* it comes next to godliness ;” and it may have

done that, perhaps, in Mrs. A.'s case, without inciting her to become of alabaster purity. She promised Mr. Poppet to have a good wash out ; each article of furniture should be accurately dusted, and everything made spick and span for our arrival. We called a week afterwards, and found seven days' extra dirt upon No. 19 and its inhabitants, and were assured that the work of reformation was to be begun that afternoon. We called again next day, when Mrs. A. immediately set to work to dust the knocker, as though that were the sole appurtenance to No. 19 still left unmirrorlike and spotless. When, after many injunctions on the one side, and promises on the other, we arrived at last with baggage and baby, as tenants, we found all things in primal chaos, with the kitchen-fire out, and no milk in the house for our beloved infant. Retreat, alas, had become impossible ; and indeed we had cut it off ourselves by a remonstrance, ending with a policeman, with the cormorants in Porchester Oblong.

The domestic of No. 19 at that epoch—the first of eleven Marys who trusted for a greater or less time to the empty promises to pay of Mrs. A.—was rather a pretty young person, and a good deal cleaner than her mistress, but so hopelessly stupid, that upon being desired to fetch a cab for Mr. Poppet precisely at 2 P.M., she brought up at that hour a pair of lighted candles, as though he were about to conjure, read Shakspeare publicly, or perform high-mass. It was her custom also to put letters intrusted to her for the post into any chink or box which offered itself out of doors, especially any that had *Letters* on it, in the simple faith that that was all Mr. Rowland Hill required of her. There was also a Miss A., of ten years old or so, residing at No. 19 with her mamma ; but she was a lily of the field, and toiled for nobody ; nay, the one domestic was principally occupied in waiting upon her, in curling her hair, and getting her up generally, in order that she might apply herself, in correct drawing costume, to the piano. Yes, Miss Euphemia had a voice, as we well knew—was intended, as Mrs. A. confided to me, for the Opera ; “ my only objection being, Ma'am, that

I am told it is not a good profession for the soul." Extreme simplicity, indeed, would seem to come next to cleanliness in the scale of this lady's virtues, and next to that, perhaps, truth. She would appeal to Heaven upon the very slightest provocation, to excuse her omission to make a pudding, or to account for the absence of sippets from a hash. All day long, we could hear her solemnly protesting to tradespeople and others at the door of No. 19, that she had not got one penny in the house, but that next week, as sure as there was a sun in the sky, their demands should be satisfied in full. She made no sort of difference in this formula, whether we had just settled with her for her week's account or not ; and it is my firm belief that she never paid any one of them for anything. I had to go out for the barest necessities of life myself, not even the milkman consenting to send round to No. 19 without the express understanding that the provision was for the lodgers, and not for Mrs. A. "Why, Ma'am," said he, "that 'ooman might have bathed in the milk I've sent her these last six months, without my seeing the colour of her money;" and certainly he could scarcely have selected a more awful image by which to have expressed his feelings. When, indeed, the claims of her landlord and her daughter's singing-master had been satisfied, I don't suppose that poor Mrs. A. had really much money to spare, and, of course, under these circumstances, she could do no less than live upon us. She had taken No. 19 upon spec. of a gentleman (Mr. B.), who rented it upon spec. of a certain lady (Mrs. C.), who had furnished it upon spec., and never paid a shilling to the original proprietor (Mr. D.), who had built the house upon spec., and was now at Boulogne. Neither A. nor B., nor C. nor D., had any money at all, I think, but were entirely dependent upon P. (the Poppets) for existence.

Mrs. C. (who once called upon Mrs. A. in company with a gentleman in a hansom cab, with the hopeless intention of getting a five-pound note out of her), by whose elegant, and somewhat expensive taste the furniture had been chosen, had

herself resided at No. 19 as long as she could get provisions upon credit, and had been succeeded by Mr. D., who had done the same ; so that not only was the bell of No. 19 a good deal pulled, and the knocker considerably worked—they came with a rap, but went away without one—but also, in the course of the four-and-twenty hours, expostulation, and even direct menace, floated up to the drawing-room floor in ceaseless waves. It may seem strange that we should have put up with inconvenience of this kind for a single week ; but the fact was, that Mr. Poppet, and myself and the baby, had suffered such incredible things at the hands of lodging-house keepers, that we had fallen into a sort of torpor of despair. Therefore, although a good deal alarmed and frightened, I did not rush out of the house at once, on the occasion when Mrs. A. enticed me into her bed-room in the attics, and there exhibited a chestful of the most extraordinary and suspicious splendours—beautiful laces, heaps of cashmere shawls, necklaces of diamonds, jewels of every sort and kind, to be offered to me, as a valued friend, at what were certainly exceedingly low prices. She told me a strange story of her having once been lady's-maid to a person of fashion, and that confidence having been reposed in her by many females of high rank, they now intrusted her with these valuables to sell for them, they being more in want of money than of the goods, which, however, looked quite unworn and new. It was not a satisfactory account of the things, certainly ; but a peril which befell our own goods and chattels about this time, drove Mrs. A.'s secret treasure quite out of my recollection. This was no less than a menace on the part of Mr. D. to put an execution into No. 19, unless his rent was paid. Mr. B., it seems, had been trying the screw upon our spotted landlady for a considerable period, with as little effect as Mrs. C.'s mechanical endeavours had had upon *him* ; and the poor gentleman at Boulogne could make nothing out of his house whatever. We received this information from one of the many domestics whom Mrs. A. had cajoled out of their gratuitous services ; and it being further corroborated by the

good lady's most solemn denial, I sent off Mr. Poppet to see Mr. D.'s lawyer in Bedford Row. My beloved husband is not very much used to business transactions, and he returned home, after some hours, in a most miserable condition. He had entirely failed in persuading the legal gentleman—who appears to have been rather deaf and excessively obstinate—that he was not B. or some other defaulter connected with No. 19. He said we could expect no mercy after such conduct as ours had been, and that nothing would be secured to us except our wearing apparel. I packed up what little plate we had, at once, and took that and my dressing-case, with a moderator-lamp and a bran-new silk umbrella, to a friend's, for safety. When I had done that, and not before, I began to listen to Mrs. A.'s expostulations upon the folly of apprehending such a thing as a distress-warrant in *her* house, when she had £500 worth of property under the bed in her room, let alone as much again behind the wainscot in the back dining-parlour. I am not sure, indeed, whether her riches or her poverty made us the most uncomfortable. In the daytime, the house was besieged by importunate creditors, and in the evening and late into the night, haunted by mustached gentlemen of foreign appearance, and very much shawled, who had, I suppose, jewellery business to transact with Mrs. A. A magnificently attired lady of some fifty years of age having called upon one occasion, and had a most stormy interview, I animadverted, after her departure, upon the disturbance so respectable-looking a person had created.

"Lor, Ma'am," explained her opponent, "how deceived you be, to be sure! Now, have you never heard, about twelve or one o'clock, a party a singing and a hollering up our street?"

"Yes," said I, "I have, and it's very disagreeable."

"Well, Ma'am, now, that party is the same party—the very same;" which information was accompanied by a telegraphic signal indicating that the party drank a little.

I began to feel very uncomfortable in No. 19 by this time; was convinced that people were about the house at night, and sent Mr. Poppet out to look with a revolver, more than once,

locking the bed-room door after him very carefully. He, however, manlike, having chosen the lodgings, determined upon the whole to like them : and I don't know but that we should have been there now, except for this.

One day we went out, baby and all, to dinner in the neighbourhood ; and while we were enjoying that repast in the parlour, our nursery-maid received a rather startling piece of information in the kitchen.

"A pretty house your master and mistress have got into at last !" observed the footman.

"Well, I don't know," replied Sarah, who is quite impervious to satire. "I call it excessively dirty, at all events."

"*That aint the worst,*" said Thomas : "*it's the West End receiving-house for stolen goods !*"

Whether it really was so or not, or how Thomas got to know it, I can't tell ; but by the next afternoon we had everything packed and in a cab for instant departure. Nobody had certainly entered the house that morning ; but as I raised my eyes, by no means regretfully, to the first floor windows, without doubt I saw a gentleman standing there, in our own drawing-room, with mustaches, of foreign appearance, and very much shawled. Mr. Poppet wanted to run in again and demand an explanation ; but "no," said I, "certainly not. You're sure to see it all some day in the police reports ; and nobody belonging to me shall ever cross the threshold of No. 19, W., again."



THE BLANKSHIRE THICKET.



HICKETS in Blankshire are not now the dense masses of underwood which they are still popularly believed to be, and which, perhaps, once they were. The ram of the patriarch Isaac would scarcely be caught in any one of these by his horns ; vast quantities of sheep, indeed, make their pasture-land of our thicket without paying further tribute to the briars and prickly gorse than a few handfuls of wool, and a man may walk miles and miles upon it without meeting with greater inconveniences than an occasional thorn in his flesh.

The lordly stag (not seldom uncartered on our thicket) finds scarce an obstacle which his easy canter cannot surmount without a bound ; the large-limbed hounds, whose mistress is the Queen herself, dash through it at full speed, unheedful of the gorse which reddens their tail tips ; and the scarlet-coated hunters take their way by fifties and by hundreds across the densest part of it almost as swiftly as along its open turf roads.

A lonely spot it is at all seasons, bleak enough in winter, but beautiful and brilliant with colour in the summer time ; then, except the little round bald patches which mark the

halting-places of the numerous companies of gipsies who at that period haunt our Blankshire thicket, all is green or golden. The soft south wind is never weary of blowing there, although always somewhat faint with the odour of the gorse blossoms ; the lark is never tired of singing in the blue above, the grasshopper of chirping in the green beneath, nor the butterfly of roaming over the dangerous blooms whose sharp spears threaten in vain its delicate fairy wings. There are few thickets like it, and those few are growing fewer day by day. It is not impossible that the Enclosure Act may lay its claws, or one of its clauses, before long even upon Brierly Thicket ; indeed, I have missed a corner here, and a good strip there, and what I have known to be a capital rabbit bank, has become a corn-field patch already, so that the sooner I say what I have got to say about our thicket—Brierly Thicket—while it *is* a thicket—the better.

In the good old times, which were five-and-thirty years ago exactly, Brierly, which is now a stagnant country town, was a place of importance. The great western road to London, the king's highway (which is now, alas ! the railroad), ran through it, and upon that road seventy-three coaches passed and repassed daily. Forty-five of these changed horses at the Calderton Arms, which was the best hotel in our town, and patronised by Lord Calderton, of Brierly Park, who in those days saved us the trouble of choosing a representative in Parliament by nominating one himself, and bidding us vote for him.

In those good old times it must be confessed that our thicket was not so safe as it is now. No coach ever crossed it after dusk without the guard having his loaded blunderbuss ready to his hand, lest he should meet with any gentlemen of the road, and many were the robberies to which, despite that precaution, passengers were obliged to submit.

Brierly farmers driving home from market in the evenings used to go armed, and with at least one companion. Pedlars who were foolish enough to expose the contents of a valuable pack at any place upon one side of our thicket, rarely got

scot-free to the other ; nay, if they made resistance, they sometimes never crossed it at all, for highway robbery being then a hanging matter, murder was no worse, and it was as well, said the thieves with the proverb, to be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. There was a patrol upon our thicket, it is true, but he did not very much deter the marauders, and simple nervous passengers, always mistaking him for a robber, suffered three parts of the wretchedness of being robbed in the fright. Nevertheless there were honest men, then as now, who cared for never a thief living ; and one of these was Farmer Johnson, of Stoat Farm, near Brierly, and another was my Uncle Jack.

Farmer Johnson was accustomed to cross our thicket at all seasons and at any hour, as often alone as in company, and unless he walked (which, as he was fourteen stone, he was generally loth to do), without even an ash-plant wherewith to defend himself. He ran such risks indeed without ever coming to harm, that it was popularly understood, in fun, that he was himself in league with the highwaymen, which in those times it was not such a very uncommon thing for men of some substance to be. Nevertheless, even Farmer Johnson was stopped at last upon our thicket.

He was returning late at night from Fussworth market in his gig alone, and with a pretty heavy purse in his pocket, the proceeds of a successful sale in barley ; his good fortune made him whistle as he drove, and his good mare Salt-fish, who was almost a thoroughbred, spankled along merrily without touch of whip, as if she sympathised with her master. When they had reached about the middle of our thicket, a man sprang up on either side the road from amid the gorse and stood in the way, while at the same instant a third fellow laid his hand upon the gig behind. Farmer Johnson understood the state of affairs at a glance, and knowing that he could rely upon the mare, took his measures accordingly : by a sharp pull at the bit he caused the docile Salt-fish (who had come to a full stop upon two legs and presented the unusual sign in heraldry of a horse rampant in a gig passant,

to run backwards with surprising agility, knocking down the gentleman behind, and playfully trampling upon him in her retreat ; thus Farmer Johnson extricated himself from the dilemma, and, had he been wise, would have trotted back to Fussworth well satisfied enough : but he had just come from thence, and was bound for his own residence, Stroat Farm, nor was he a man very easily induced to change his determination. Gathering up the reins, therefore, and holding the mare well together, he rushed her at the two men who still stopped the way, and scattered them like chaff.

“ Good-night, gentlemen ! ” he cried, satirically, as he bowled along at some fifteen miles an hour ; but the words had scarcely left his lips when Salt-fish and gig and all heeled completely over, and Farmer Johnson’s triumph was ended. The three thieves, it seems, regardless of omens, were the proprietors of a long stout rope, which was stretched across the road on pegs, and had thus caused his misfortune. In another minute, and before he could rise, his enemies were upon him ; resistance from an unarmed man was useless, for though they had no pistols they could have beaten out his brains with their bludgeons in a few minutes ; so Farmer Johnson submitted as patiently as he could, and confined himself to making a particular study of their countenances, with a view to recognising them under more auspicious circumstances. They took his purse, and gave him a good drubbing, in return for the trouble which he had given them, and they would have doubtless taken his mare also, but that she had in the mean time gone off towards Stroat Farm, of her own accord, with the resuscitated gig behind her.

Farmer Johnson, as he started homewards on foot amid the laughter of his despoilers, was sensible neither of his loss nor of his bruises : an overwhelming desire for revenge swallowed up, like a Moses’ rod, all other feelings ; he had scarce patience to get a prudent distance away from his late companions before he gave the long shrill whistle, which Salt-fish knew so well as her master’s summons ; back came the high-blooded mare at a hand-gallop, instantly, and the

farmer climbed up into the gig ; he put his hand under the driving seat and brought out exultingly a new sharp sickle.

" Fool that I was," cried he, " to have forgotten this, which I bought only this very day." It was a present which he had promised to one of his men, and ten minutes before would perhaps have been worth two hundred pounds to him. " What's done, however, *can* be undone," according to the persevering farmer, and giving the mare a flick with the whiplash, he turned her into a turf-road which runs through our thicket from the place where he was, and joins the highway again by a circumbendibus ; by this means he could come, from the same direction as before, over the very same ground, and if the thieves should be still there, he was prepared for them. His only fear was that they would have decamped with their booty. They, however, thinking that " old twenty-stun " (as they had irreverently called him) would be a long time in going afoot to Brierly, had set their trap anew for more game from Fussworth Market, and hearing the sound of wheels, pricked up their ears and grasped their bludgeons. No sooner, however, did the running footman, the third man of the party, lay his hand upon the gig behind, than Farmer Johnson, who was waiting for him, struck him over the head with the sickle, to such good purpose that the man dropped in the road.

" I forgot," cried the stout yeoman, as he came up with the other two, " I forgot, when I met you before, Sirs, to give you this," holding up the weapon, and leaping out upon the left-hand man : this fellow, astounded by such an address, and really bewildered at seeing again the same individual who he had such excellent means for knowing was elsewhere and in sad plight, made but a feeble resistance, and after his fall, his comrade took to his heels across the trackless thicket. The farmer was at no time very well calculated to catch a runner, and pursuit was of course, under the circumstances, not to be thought of. The stolen purse was luckily in the pocket of the first man, and with that and his two captives—most grievously mauled by the sickle—the plucky old yeoman

came into Brierly about daybreak, and covered himself, as may well be believed, with provincial glory.

The other adventure, which I remember to have happened upon our thicket, occurred to my Uncle Jack. He was what was called, in those good old times which I have referred to, a red-hot Radical, or as we should now say, a moderate Whig, and in the electioneering practices of that date he was a somewhat unscrupulous proficient. His hatred of the noble house of Calderton, which arrogated to itself the right of appointing the member for the borough, was of a nature of which we moderns, unacquainted as we are with what political animosity really means, can have no conception: "all's fair at election time," was a favourite moral precept with my uncle, and one up to which, whenever Brierly was contested, he most conscientiously acted.

The struggle between the nominee of his lordship, and a certain yellow candidate from the metropolis was, upon one occasion—the first in which the Calderton rule was rebelled against with any hope of success—excessively keen, and the screw was put very sharply upon the Brierly tenants. Uncle Jack, the better to observe the enemy, was stopping at the Calderton Arms itself, from which he secretly sent forth his ukases, and regulated Liberal affairs. He saw that these were going badly, that more money was wanted, and that, for certain reasons, neither in Brierly notes, nor even in those of the Bank of England, but in good, untestifying, unrecognisable gold sovereigns from the Mint. There was very little time to procure it in, and the getting it from town was a highly important and most confidential task; so Uncle Jack, after some consultation with those he considered could be trusted, determined to undertake it himself.

Nobody, reasoned he, would surely suspect him, an inmate of the Calderton Arms, of being the purse-bearer of the Friends of Liberty. Robert Supple, the landlord, who was, of course, Caldertonian to the backbone, and had a considerable following, was a dull man, who thought himself shrewd, and of the easiest possible sort to hoodwink; while his son

was a scamp, if not something even worse, whose feelings were not likely to be interested in any electioneering matter whatever.

Uncle Jack was neither a dull man nor a scamp, ergo (so he proved it) he was more than a match for them. He ordered out his gig and his big brown horse in order to go to Fussworth ; there was certainly no mistake about that ; he mentioned Fussworth twice, distinctly, to Mr. Supple, who was smoking his pipe at the inn-door, with an expression of countenance as though he were personifying human wisdom at the request of some eminent sculptor. He spoke of Fussworth, casually, to Supple the younger, as he hung about the inn-yard, as usual, with both his idle hands in his pockets ; and Fussworth, said he, nodding to the enquiring ostler, as he snatched the horsecloth cleverly off the brown at the moment of departure ; and yet Uncle Jack was going farther than Fussworth that same day, nevertheless.

It was night—midnight, by the time my uncle got upon our thicket again upon his way home. He had nobody with him, and no weapon of any kind, and he had two thousand pounds in gold under the gig-seat. It was upon this last account that he kept his eyes so sharply round him, and listened so painfully with his ears, and not through any fear upon his own account, for Uncle Jack was bold as a lion. He was anxious lest the cause of liberty should suffer a dire loss ; lest the Calderton clique should triumph on this as on all other occasions, through any misadventure of his ; and it was for this alone that he feared the chances of the dark and the highwaymen. Blindfold, he had almost known every inch of the way, and he drove through the gloom as softly as he possibly could, with his wheels low on the sand, and dumb on the turf, and grating on the hard road but rarely ; sometimes he would even pull up to listen, and he did not press the big brown to speed at any time, but kept him as fresh as his long journey would permit him to be, in case it should come to a stern chase.

Presently, in the centre of the way, there loomed a horse-

man, and the fatal "Stand !" rang hoarsely out over the heath. My uncle would have made a rush, and trusted to the fellow's pistol missing fire, but he saw that the muzzle covered him, and that the risk was too tremendous for that. The robber, who was masked, rode up to his side with the weapon still levelled, and demanded the money. My uncle offered him his watch and some loose sovereigns, but the other shook his head.

"I want the money under the seat," cried he, hoarsely ; "I know you have it there."

"If you know that," said my uncle, quietly, "you must also know that not a penny of it belongs to me : I will not voluntarily give it up to any man—I will die first—but since you have a pistol, I cannot help your taking it if you have a mind ; and may I live to see you hung, you rascal !"

Uncle Jack used some rather excited language besides, which would better bear repetition in those good old times than in these, and then sullenly shifted his legs, so that the bags of gold under the seat could be got at. The highwayman leaned forward to reach them with one hand, still keeping the pistol levelled in the other, as though he knew the man he had to deal with ; but in doing this he bent his head for a second, and before he could raise it again Uncle Jack was upon him like a lion. By striking spurs into his horse the robber managed to extricate himself, but in the brief struggle the pistol went off harmlessly, and remained with my uncle, and before the wretch could draw another, the big brown was laying his four feet to the ground to some purpose ; they were nearly at the end of our thicket, before the enraged highwayman could come within range of them.

"Chuck out the gold," he cried, in a terrible voice, "or I'll shoot ye !"

"Shoot and —," halloed Uncle Jack, whose flying wheels, no longer particular about making a noise, drowned the rest of the sentence. "I'll lay a pound that I live to see you hung !" He knew it was not an easy matter for a man on horseback to shoot a man in a gig—both flying. After

they had gone on in this fashion for some time—"Patrol!" cried my uncle, joyfully, and at the full pitch of his voice.

"Death and thunder!" or something of that kind, exclaimed the highwayman, as he pulled up his mare upon her haunches. By which device Uncle Jack gained fifty yards, and got quite clear of our thicket. In five minutes more he had reached the toll-gate, and was out of Robberland.

Not a word said he of his adventure to the ostler, roused up at one in the morning to attend upon him; only, "What has become of the gray?" asked he, carelessly, as his eyes rested upon an empty stall in the huge stable wherein his own brown was housed.

"Master Willum has took him out to Wutton until the day after to-morrow," was the simple reply.

Uncle Jack retired to rest with the serenest of smiles, and deposited the gold in safety under the mattress. On the next morning his landlord waited upon him after breakfast, by particular desire.

"How many votes, my good friend," said my uncle, "can you really command now, independently of his lordship?"

"Why, you surely aint a-coming that game?" said the innkeeper, grimly. "I should have thought you had known me by this time better than that: I am a-going to bring seventeen voters up to poll next week to vote for the true blue, however, and I don't care who knows it."

"Seventeen," said my uncle, smiling, "that will do capitally; I should not have thought, Mr. Supple, you could have brought so many. This will be equivalent to giving us thirty-four," added he, soliloquising, "and we only wanted thirty to win."

"To giving you thirty-four?" cried the indignant host; "why, I'd see you hanged first; leastways, not you, Sir, but the whole yellow lot. . . ."

"Do you know this pistol?" exclaimed my uncle, suddenly, and with a great deal of sternness, "and are you aware to whom it belongs?"

"Yes, I do," said the innkeeper, a little uncomfortable,

but not in the least suspecting what was to come, "it belongs to my son William."

"It does!" said Uncle Jack. "I took it from him last night upon Brierly Thicket, where he tried to commit a highway robbery with a badly-fitting mask on his face—which is a *hanging matter*, Mr. Supple."

The agony of the father (who was only too convinced of the truth of what was said, as he had himself mentioned to his son his suspicions of what my uncle was really gone to Fussworth about) was terrible to witness, and moved the accuser greatly. "Spare him; spare my son!" exclaimed the poor fellow.

"Do I look like the sort of man to hang the son of anybody who promises to do me a favour?" said Uncle Jack, placidly; "but," added he, with meaning, "you had better not forget those seventeen voters, Mr. Supple."

And so it turned out, that through Uncle Jack's adventure in the Blankshire Thicket, the yellow candidate came in for Brierly for two thousand pounds less than what he had calculated it would cost him.





PARGATE-SUPER-MARE.



RS. HARRIS and myself have too small an income and too large a family to dream of keeping a carriage all the year round ; but for six weeks in the summer months we almost attain to that dignity. We hire for that period a four-wheeled vehicle of considerable size, and, although it has no horses, we pay a woman solely to look after it. It holds my better-half and the two girls, and the nurse and baby, quite comfortably ; but although it has a commodious box, with a hood to it, I am not permitted even to ride outside at the same time ; the boys and myself go out at a different time of day : in short, and to confess the whole secret at once, the machine is a bathing-machine.

About the end of July, when town begins to be too hot to hold her, Mrs. Harris discovers that our dear *Jemima's* back is "giving," and requires to be strengthened by salt water ; or that Master Tommy is dyspeptic ; or her dear self failing as to appetite. If I dispute these matters, she will detect lumbago in myself, and get a couple of doctors to agree with her ; so I need not say (having been married twenty years) that I give in at once ; she descends upon *Pargate* on the

east coast without resistance, and there we take our bathing-machine. Pargate, as I say of the baby, is very charming when it's asleep : when the narrow winding streets are deserted of their roaring throng, and when I can set foot on its beach without becoming the prey of savage boatmen and the sport of donkey-boys. It is not quite so pleasant at other times. It must have been built, I think, by a succession of daring speculators, each of whom ran up his line of houses to his last sixpence, and then failed ; for the terraces are generally unfinished at either end, and from each starts an entirely fresh style of building, often at right angles, but always with a quite new direction, as though it would distinctly state : "We are Inkerman Villas—a totally different affair from Alma Cottages ; and quite in another sphere, we flatter ourselves, from that of Balaclava Buildings." A gigantic dwelling-house, like "three single gentlemen rolled into one," forms the centre of these rows, as a double number stands out in a game of dominoes ; and dotted about, even in the heart of the High Street, are "Prospect Mansions," with a little blister on one side for a green-house, set in a garden-ground of the size of a street-tumbler's carpet, with a fish-pond sunk in it of the dimensions of a foot-pan.

In order to get sufficient "view of the sea" for the conscientious Pargateers to print it under their "Furnished Apartments," a wooden chamber is built upon the roof, or a gallery run out from the second story, or even a flagstaff stuck up, which an enthusiastic lodger may climb, and sit cross-legged upon with a telescope ; so that if the picturesque is born of the irregular, Pargate from the sea should rival the Bay of Naples.

When the visitors are sleeping in all the parlours, and packed together in cases like herrings in the great Assembly-rooms, there is still always "One Bed to Let" in every house : your taking it for a week or so doesn't in the least affect that announcement suspended over the area railings ; for your landlady will assure you that two gentlemen—who at present are taking it in turns to lean against a post all

night, perhaps—are only awaiting your departure ; or that the notice refers to accommodation she has yet to offer in the lumber-garret. If you only rent a bed-room, you must put up with coming through the whole of the back-yards from the end of the row, because the front door opens immediately into the chief sitting-room, where a family of distinction holds its state.

I don't think there is any shop in Pargate—except, may be, the watchmakers'—where they don't sell prawns. The whole cry of the place, from morn to eve—like the “Woe, woe !” of Jerusalem—is, “Prawns, prawns—fresh prawns !” Parcels of from twenty to two hundred are left all day at your lodgings by mistake, and newspapers full of them poked in your pocket as you walk about, and sold to you whether you will or no. Another trouble of the town is its warm bathing-establishments ; its vapour douche—whatever that is—and medicated baths ; into these you are liable to be dragged, stripped to the skin, and then to have your skin taken off and bones broken, unless you are very sharp indeed : the opposition bathers will tear you asunder in the High Street, rather than not accomplish their horrid purpose. Also, if you are small and light, so strong is the rivalry of the fly-drivers, that you are liable to be snatched up bodily, and carried a great distance against your will. Mrs. Harris, although, as I can well believe, she made a great resistance, was conveyed to the Tuileries Tea-garden, a mile and a half into the country, and back again in this manner, for ninepence. It is cheap enough, certainly ; but then, when one doesn't want to go, where's the good ? They say they don't care for money, but only custom, to have the appearance of driving a good business ; but think of them driving Mrs. Harris—who is *not* business—and her infant for three miles as a living (and kicking) advertisement ! Finally, if you escape these different snares, it is not to be hoped for that you will evade raffling for an American clock ; there are three bazaars in Pargate, open day and night for this purpose, with emissaries in every quarter of the town. In one

of these—the Boulevard Italien, by reason of the four aloes in green pots ; the Grecian Saloon, because of the naked Cupid who holds the umbrellas in the doorway ; or the Hall of Pyramids—imagination fails in accounting for this title—in one of these you must needs sooner or later be entrapped. By an outlay of sixpence, you reap the singular advantage of drawing out of a Wheel of Fortune the American clock, sixpence, or a blank. I never knew but one person who got his sixpence back again, and that he was obliged to spend in the bazaar ; while the clock has stood over the wheel, to my own knowledge, these five seasons, as though it were meant for eternity rather than time. Each of our children has invested the required amount for every successive year, but still they live in hope ; and from the wheel and its devotees a moral might at least be drawn, if not an American clock.

The pier, which is not finished at the end—nothing is finished at Pargate—is crowded all day long by people in the lightest of raiments ; loose coats without waistcoats, and transparent gowns ; and everybody wears yellow slippers, as though a great fire had broken out while we were all undressing, and driven us out *en déshabillé* for safety. When a pleasure-boat is hired, all the children cheer ; and the adventurous lessee affects the manner of Mr. Jones of the Surrey, as “the Rover of the Bloody Hand,” until the sail is set, and the bark begins to wobble, when he is sea-sick incontinently. Indeed, our Pargate visitors are for the most part cockneys, unaccustomed to the briny deep, who prefer fishing in what they call “the Arbour” to going out to sea.

The beach is not so crowded as the pier, principally, as I believe, because there is no charge for going upon it, and it is indeed a very pleasant place. First, we thread a camp of bathing-machines, just now not in use, which, we are assured by the amphibious party in charge of them, “it is one body’s work to keep clear of the parties who will read novels and flirt upon the steps, or smoke cigars inside.” Some of these have white, and some spotted awnings, raising the idea of

their being the habitations of some tremendous female, who is not able to get her skirts and the bend of her back inside. At distances varying from a yard to a mile from land, there are scores of these vehicles—the one with blue wheels, from which those screams are proceeding, is ours, for Tommy is now taking his antidyspeptic—and under and about them are dancing nymphs of a fawn-colour, and elderly dippers in blue. It is a very favourite amusement to watch them taking hands and dancing on these yellow sands, while the white waves list, as Shakspeare, with Pargate doubtless in his eye, has before described. There is a strong tide here at certain seasons, with unexpected currents and shifting sands. On one occasion, as Mrs. Harris was disporting herself under the protection of the speckled awning, a male voice addressed her from without.

“Go away, you wicked wretch !” she screamed ; “go away directly, bad man !”

“Madam,” replied the voice—“Madam, it is the tide ; the nip-tide or the spring-tide, or something, and I cannot help it ; it has carried away my bathing-machine, and all my things, and I must climb into this one, or be drowned.”

“If you only dare,” said my wife—“if you only dare so much as to lift the awning, I will—yes, I will—I will cry, Police !” and with that she ran up the steps as fast as her bathing-gown would permit, bolted the door of the machine, and (she says) fainted. But the man held on desperately to the outside of the awning, had his clothes taken to him in the water, dressed, and waded home.

I was nearly driven away from Pargate last year by an affair of this kind that happened to myself. I had ordered out our vehicle to a great distance, under the impulse of my extreme modesty, and because there were ladies on the beach, and was swimming lazily about the pier-head, when I suddenly felt myself drifting shoreward. I struggled to regain the machine : but the current—the current I had heard so much of—was too much for me. I was not afraid of drowning, for I could keep myself afloat well enough ; but worse

than death by drowning threatened me : I was being gradually borne, in spite of all my efforts, directly down upon the esplanade ! I felt myself blushing from head to foot—tingling, I may say, from top to toe—and the water getting shallower every moment. I dared not turn my face to shore, but raised my voice as well as I could in warning.

“Ladies !” I cried—“ladies ! the current is carrying me to your feet. I cannot help it—upon my word, I can’t—and I shall be on dry land in a couple of minutes. I shall have to run along the beach”—I thought it better to tell them the worst at once—“I shall have to run nearly a hundred yards, ladies, before I can jump in again with any hope of regaining my bathing-machine.” When I had said this, I thought they would be off ; but from a hurried glance over my right shoulder, I saw they were still there, about four-and-twenty of them, and I heard a sound of suppressed laughter.

“Ladies !” I began again—and how I wished I might be a sand-eel to the end of my days rather than what I was—“ladies ! don’t look in this direction ; but I call you to witness that it is only the cur—cur”— At this place I got my mouth full of shingle, and found myself not more than ankle-deep in water. Let the *Pargate Star* of the ensuing Saturday tell the rest ; I am not sure, indeed, but that it was *on* the Saturday that this dreadful thing occurred, and that there was a special edition of the *Star* devoted to me that very evening. At all events, here it is : “DISGRACEFUL OUTRAGE !—We regret to say that the esplanade of Pargate was made the scene, at midday, of a flagrant outrage, the perpetrator of which, we trust, the police will make every effort to secure. While our fair promenaders were employing their minds upon the beach with thoughtful books, or knitting graceful articles for the adornment of their boudoirs, they were terrified by the appearance of an elderly monster in human form swimming swiftly towards them, and uttering the most savage but unintelligible sounds.” (This refers, I suppose, to my simple statement regarding the force of the current.) “Our fair friends, of course, rose on the instant,

and made the best of their way homeward"—[they did nothing of the kind, but sat as still and composedly as though I had been the commonest species of jelly-fish]—"and the ruffian, having reached the shore, contented himself with pursuing them for a moderate distance with dreadful cries." This libellous paragraph affected my spirits for some time afterwards, but I have long got over it; and I am happy to state that Mrs. Harris is quite unacquainted with the circumstance.

Next to bathing, the great business at Pargate is the collection of shells and weeds, and creeping things. Since Mr. Gosse's natural history books, and Mr. Kingsley's *Wonders of the Shore*, have come out, everybody has a glass tank of his own, which he calls a *vivarium* or an *aquarium*.

My dressing-room has been taken possession of by my daughters for these marine purposes, and my bath for a receptacle of decayed fungi and pieces of rock that are not sufficiently picturesque, or that are unfitted for forming retreats to the Mesembryanthea or Crassicornes. I pay about 10s. a week for sea-water, brought morning and evening for the accommodation of Actiniæ. It would make Mr. Hume turn in his grave to know what it costs me in shrimps alone for our gigantic polypus. The only creature amongst them, I confess, I have much regard for is a horribly ugly hermit-crab. I have seen him glide out of a cranny all unawares, and sideways, and kill and eat on all sides of him without Jemima being in the least aware of who did the mischief. She thinks the dust must have got in through the oil-skin cover, or the heat through the muslin blind, and slain her pet ziziphinus; whereas the last-named gentleman, incautiously venturing out of his red house, has been seized upon by my talented friend, partially swallowed, and partially thrust back again into his own doorway, to save appearances.

Julia gave me quite a turn the other day by running in suddenly as I was calculating our expenses for the last week, with—"Oh dear papa! there's another come; such a charming little fellow!"

"Good Heavens!" said I, still thinking of the bills and what the baby cost—"impossible!"

"Oh yes," said she, "there is, papa; another little yellow sea-anemone!" which was a great relief to me and matter of real congratulation.

I have been also compelled to purchase a set of—as seems to me—glass surgical instruments, for the extraction of all unpleasant marine deposits, and a large earthenware jar, with iron clamps, for the final conveyance of all this rubbish into the City! I rather flatter myself, however, as I know I shall have to carry it, that this last may be dropped by accident between Pargate-super-Mare and London Bridge. All the flirtations that used to be conducted over the crochet and Berlin wool are now transferred to the vivarium; potichomanie itself, after a short struggle, has succumbed to the tank. One of the young doctors of the place, and otherwise a sensible person, is always hanging about my dressing-room; he "dotes on zoophytes," he says; and I expect to hear him say every day how he dotes on Jemima. I wish, for both their sakes, that he had a house to his back, like his favourite Neritæ, and didn't live in lodgings. I don't mean to say that Doctor Blank would

Botanise upon his mother's grave;

but I do think, if she was drowned, and covered with cockles, he would look to the cockles first, and to his mother afterwards.

Besides the eternal splendours of the bazaars and the Tuileries Tea-gardens, there is a periodical glory to Pargate, twice a year, in its regattas. On those great days, the pier is crowded more than ever, as well with natives as with aliens brought from any distance at fares fabulously low. There are sailing-matches and rowing-matches, and duck-hunting and fireworks, got up, as the bills say, "in a style of Eastern profusion," which I do not think, as regards the duck-hunting at least, can be quite the appropriate thing to say. Such fleets of vessels cover the harbour and offing on these occa-

sions, that I could never make out the competitors until this very summer, when, under the guidance of an old boatman, I identified everything capitally. "The Blue," he said, "was Jack Spiers; and the Green was Jim Ogle; and the Yeller was 't' e Old 'Un.' The Old 'Un was as good an oar as e'er a one in Pargate, let it be who it will, and had rowed this twenty year; ay, and had won too, except the last time or so."

"Getting *too* old, perhaps," I suggested.

"Too old! Why, he aint a day older than I be," said my gray-headed friend, "if so much;" which of course shut up that channel of discussion. Presently poor "Yeller" dropped behind, and was clearly to everybody—except my companion—giving himself up for last: to *him*, he was only "pullin' a good starn-race." Next he dropped his oar, and had to go back for it, which threw him out completely.

"Ay, if it had not been for that now," said his ally; and "even yet the Old 'Un will be somewheres." That vague position turned out to be some fifty yards behind at the finish; and yet there was a balm remaining to my friend: "Well, anyways, the Old 'Un didn't show no white feather," he said.

I confess my heart was fully with "Yeller" throughout—as whose would not be?—but I could not help thinking, as I stood on that same pier in the evening, alone and under the quiet stars, of how, in the far Crimea, and in a more deadly struggle,* we put our confidence, through feelings as honourable perhaps as mistaken, in the "old 'uns" still; and my thought carrying me away in that direction, I could not help contrasting Balaclava Bay, and what was doing there, and on the terrible heights a few miles away from it, with the repose and peace of that moonlit scene before me. The tide was out, and all the heaven steeped in darkness, save where some "still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand," glistened like a star; a hundred masts and spars stood out against the sky;

* This paper was published in 1855.

and anchors, like huge beasts, and hulls, uncovered to their keels, loomed strangely. The sea stretched out in calm to northward without a coast, specked here and there with lights from passing vessels ; four steadfast fires, which yet I could but see at intervals, burned right in front—the four revolving lights that are set up on the shifting Pargate Sands. The town was not yet sleeping, but the streets had lost their stir, and from the higher windows flashed the gleams ; the flag-posts and the wooden galleries look fair enough under the mellow moon, and the quaint dwellings climbing up the cliff, and all the range of terrace on the heights. Not one in all the populous place need dream of war ; and yet if our positions were but changed, and Russian ships might scour our seas as we the Euxine and the Baltic, one half an hour of a frigate's time would serve to lay all in ruins. I felt myself forgetting whose the fatal fault was, and who provoked the war. From thankfulness for our own safety, I passed on to pity for our foes. I shall have a respect for that two-penny pier and pictures of "Pargate by Moonlight," I am sure, for the time to come. I wonder whether people went about in yellow slippers at poor Kertch, and raffled at bazaars, and kept vivariums !





A DULL DAY ON EXMOOR.



R. ALBERT SMITH, in the course of his entertainment at the Egyptian Hall, was accustomed to preface that admirable monologue of the Engineer of the Austrian Lloyd's, with this remark, "He told me the stupidest story that I ever heard in all my life, and now, ladies and gentlemen, I am going to tell it to you." Thus I, having passed through and mercifully got out of Thursday, the twenty-eighth day of August—the dullest day by far in the white annals of my summer life—am about to communicate that experience.

The companions of my misfortune were two—Lieutenant Kidd Shinar, of her Majesty's Foot, and Olive Thompson, Esquire, of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, and, by practice, an amateur painter of landscapes. The place where we three were then and are now residing is eminently congenial to all delineators of scenery. Upon the red rocks by the sea, on little islands in the wooded streams, and upon the sides of our purple hills, there are pitched countless tents, under the shelter of which the purveyors to the water-colour exhibitions are seen during this season at their pleasant toil. When they are not thus actively employed under canvas, they saunter loosely about the village in intellectual gin-

punch-and-Shelley looking groups, with short pipes, flannel shirts, sketch-book, and moustachios. Our young ladies peep from under their slouch hats as they go by, upon the deathless works of these distinguished youths with admiration, and "Oh! I should dearly love to be a painter's wife!" they confess at nightly toilettes to their bosom friends. The parents of these young people, however, entertain very different views upon this subject, and regard our artists, as a general rule, as a less respectable order of painters and glaziers.

Nothing but desperate *ennui* could have made brothers of Olive Thompson, Kidd Shinar, and me. We had each sat at our separate table in the hotel coffee-room for eleven days running—if I may apply that word to days that crawled—quite unconscious, as it seemed, of each other's existences. When the newspaper was laid down by Thompson, about four feet from where I was, I would ring the bell to enquire of the waiter whether anybody was using the *Times*. When I had done sending my fourth letter to people I did not care a penny stamp about, Kidd Shinar would summon him in like manner and tell him to fetch a lighted candle, as though there were nothing of the kind close by. And each having heard each other's dinner orders, we would make precisely the same gastronomic enquiries upon our own account, as though we had no data to go upon. We behaved, indeed, we flattered ourselves (and without the flattery it would be impossible to keep this sort of thing up), as only English gentlemen can behave, for eleven wet days long. On the twelfth day, Kidd Shinar, of her Majesty's Foot, gave in, and commenced conversation. He made a remark which was brief, to the point, and not admmissive of any obstructive argument.

"What is to be done to-day?" we enquired simultaneously of the waiter, after breakfast.

"Well, gentlemen, I'm afraid it will be wet."

"Afraid! What do you mean by afraid?" said the lieutenant; "you know it will be wet, you vagabond! Is there anything going on besides the rain?"

"To-day, Sir—let me see, Sir—the twenty-eighth? There are races at the forest to-day, Sir."

"What forest?" I enquired.

"Exmoor, Sir,—Exmoor Forest."

"But I thought Exmoor *was* a moor," I said; "a place without a tree."

"So it is," said Thompson, "that's why they call it a forest."

"Yes, Sir."

"Well, let's go," said I.

"Exmoor is very beautiful, only a little exposed in bad weather," doubted Thompson.

"Have you got a fly in?" asked the lieutenant.

"Not exactly a covered fly; no, Sir; the covered flies are all out; we've a dog-cart, Sir." He looked through the back window where the vehicle in question was standing in the yard under a shed. The rain was falling upon it slowly and steadily, just as it had done at its commencement, two hundred and sixty-four hours before.

"I don't see any signs of a break," said Shinar, gloomily, "do you?"

"No; I only see a dog-cart," replied Thompson, laughing. We all laughed; it was very excusable in people who had not smiled for a week.

"Let us go," I said once more, greatly refreshed.

"Let's!" echoed the other two. We got a bill of the entertainment, the very simplicity of which—a farmers' plate, a pony race, and a donkey race—seemed to promise well; and Thompson, who knew the ten miles that lay between us and the festive scene, had agreed to drive. I insisted upon sitting behind, because I am of a modest and retiring nature by birth, and because I saw that my two friends would thus intervene between the rain and me. Kidd Shinar had a brand new green silk umbrella of exquisite proportions, but rather delicate make, and his get up was effeminately gorgeous, such as encases youth upon the grassy slopes of Goodwood, or in the stand on Ascot Heath. Olive Thompson was but little less resplendent

as a member of the western circuit taking holiday ; and as for myself, my clothes were from Bond Street, quite sufficiently unpaid for, and I also had a rather fashionable silk umbrella. We were certainly none of us equipped for that twenty-eighth day of August upon Exmoor. We had railway rugs and summer overcoats, however ; and lighting our cigars we started hopefully. There were seven hills or so to be ascended before we could reach the moorland, and throughout the whole of that distance did Olive Thompson descant upon the sublimity of a scene that was entirely hidden in fog ; it was like talking of some beloved relative to an unfortunate person who has never chanced to see the individual in question.

"Here's where I took my sketch of the Thread Stream," said he, suddenly pulling up at a cataract ; "you may remember the picture perhaps, Mr. Shinar, in the exhibition of last year?"

"No, I didn't see it," said the lieutenant, sharply, for he was getting bored and damp.

"In water-colours, I conclude," said I, smiling, so that he should not miss the joke.

"No, Sir," said the artist gravely, "in oils ; it was twenty feet from the door of the octagon room, and three inches from the floor ; it was considered rather fine."

"Was it?" I said, as drily.

There was then a silence for about a mile, except for the soft sough of the rain, and for the wind which caught us from time to time round the corners of the road, and threatened to overturn the whole concern into the ravine beneath.

"Look out for your umbrellas at the turn here," cried Thompson, presently.

"I can't hear a word you say," roared Kidd.

"Look out for your——"

The reiterated warning was lost in a sudden gust ; there was a sharp whirring noise, as if a pheasant had started up at the back of me ; and, turning round, I perceived the lieutenant's umbrella upside down and in ribbons, looking like nothing so much as that parachute which came down upon

Blackheath, so contrary to poor Mr. Cocker's calculations. Kidd Shinar presented a spectacle so utterly wretched, and appeared so despairingly unconscious of the rain, which was just beginning to spoil his beautifully brushed hat, that I could scarcely hold on for laughing. Thompson, who had nothing but the drippings of this green umbrella by way of shelter (which had already turned his blue cravat yellow), was, not displeased.

"I vote we go back," exclaimed Kidd Shinar.

"Oh no," said the barrister (who had a waterproof), "the weather is looking better ; and it's almost as far back as forward."

The lieutenant looked at his own exquisite boots enquiringly, and then began to whistle.

"That is Badgerley yonder, if you could see it," said Thompson, after a long pause ; "have you ever heard of the Doones of Badgerley?"

I thought I was in for some anecdotes of the aristocracy ; but I was dry, and tolerably good-humoured, and I returned for answer, that I had not, and that I felt much interest in the Doones of Badgerley.

"I can tell you all about the Doones of Yorkshire," said the lieutenant sulkily, "if that's anything to do with it. Doone was sheriff, and kept the hounds, and I've been at his place many times. He had a brother somewhere in the south."

"Ah, but he didn't commit murder, and eat human flesh habitually, as these Doones of Badgerley did — did he?" urged Thompson.

"I dare say. They were a queer lot, I believe," said Shinar, grimly.

"Bless my soul !" cried I, "it's raining very hard ; don't you think we had better go back?"

"Don't be afraid, my dear fellow," said Thompson, laughing ; "poor Doone was hung in chains on yon hillock, just seventy years ago. He had made an excursion with some members of his family to a desolate farm near Barnstaple, when nobody was at that time at home but an infant and a

maid-servant in charge of it ; the latter seeing the Doones ride up, and being aware, although she did not know them, that she had nothing to offer people of their quality, left the child in the cradle, and got into the oven out of their way. The visitors then roamed over the establishment, selecting such things as they had occasion for, and afterwards sat down in the kitchen to the baby and onions. Mr. D., however, with a poetic spirit that did him honour at the moment, but which afterwards caused him to be hung in chains, chose to deliver himself of the following distich, which he addressed extemporaneously to the food in question :

“Child, if they asks thee who eat thee,
Say thou 'twas Doones of Badgerley.”

“The girl in the oven, who had a talent for remembering verses, bore these words carefully in her mind, and after the departure of the Doones to their private residence yonder, she gave such information to the local constabulary that the result was the violent extinction of the whole family, without even an appeal to the Sir George Grey of the period.”

“How was it the girl was not done brown in the oven?” asked the lieutenant, tenaciously.

“It was on a Sunday,” answered Thompson, with calm triumph, “and the farmer was very properly accustomed to confine the household to cold meat upon that day.”

We had now got upon the great waste of Exmoor, which is interspersed with dangerous peat bogs and morasses, and extends about ten miles every way, with scarcely a fence or a tree. The rain drove up between the low hills in dense masses, but descended less thickly upon the higher parts of the road, from which we could see a good way round. On our left lay the little sluggish stream, not a yard across, which from this desolate birthplace flows down, through a land of plenty, of park and meadow, of orchard and cornfield, by the old cathedral city to the southern shore. Our attention was drawn to it on a sudden by Kidd Shinar.

“My precious jingo!”—that was the lieutenant’s expression—“if they aint red deer!”

Red deer they were, bounding one after the other over the infant Exe without any effort, and then pacing grandly on into the mist: the highest antlered of them, the stag of stags, leading by a few paces the royal herd. These red deer of Exmoor are among the few still left in England except in parks. They are hunted by a peculiar breed of dogs, fuller of tone and deeper of tongue than common, and, as some of the north country sportsmen observe, by a peculiar breed of men. The truth is, several matters have to be observed in the pursuit of deer, which are unknown to men accustomed only to follow smaller game; and those who don’t regard such particulars must expect to be stigmatised sometimes as a pack of foolish fox-hunters. The fox-hunters we know, in their own country, take it out, in their turn, upon the hare-hunters, who are sometimes addressed as thistle-whippers. This finding the deer for ourselves, or at least going to look for it after it has been marked down, seems a far nobler method than that of turning the astonished animal out of the back door of an omnibus; and the death he sometimes dies here, at bay in the dark Devon stream, or leaping in mad career down some red precipice sheer on to the sea-shore, seems fine and fitting. I happened to remark something like this to the lieutenant, whereupon he mounted his deer hobby, holding on principally by the antlers, upon the different stages and varieties of which he dilated, in the pouring rain, until I was almost ready to drop. As a botanist is the last person whom I would ask to sympathise with me upon the delights of floriculture, so I am well purposed never again to put a sportsman upon the scent of his favourite game.

We came continually upon great quantities of fine oxen, looking quite oily in the rain, and among large droves of Exmoor ponies, beautiful-eyed and eloquent featured, but unkempt and shaggy enough, and seeming piteously thin by reason of their long coats having got wet through, and clinging to their bodies; one particularly pretty fellow, standing

under a little tower with no roof to it, built into such a wall as the Picts and Scots might have erected, looked out upon us with an Irish complacency that made me laugh aloud. My companions, become by this time mere human sponges—Thompson's waterproof, by-the-bye, as wet on one side as the other, and looking like a great piece of blotting-paper—were quite incapable of seeing humour in anything ; nor did they take any interest in the cost of these little nags, from five pounds up to the fancy price of fifteen, with which, as well as with much other useful information, I attempted to favour them.

Arriving at last at the village, where the people seemed to be going about much as usual, and the day not to be considered by any means a wet one, we asked a crowd of men who were standing about a cottage door, which was the way to the inn ?

"This is the inn," said they, "and nothing but it."

It was a four-roomed dwelling, of which one apartment was a sleeping-room, and the other three were filled with sixty-eight copper-coloured natives from the neighbouring iron mines. Kidd Shinar, who had fed himself in the spirit for the last five miles upon imaginary beefsteaks and cutlets at the very least, with tarts and clotted cream to follow ; who had been warming his hands and drying himself, in idea, by a blazing fire in a private room ; who had almost gone to bed, I may say, by anticipation, in a magnificent chamber, attended by obsequious waiters, with continuous brandy and water, hot—Kidd Shinar groaned.

Olive Thompson and I took him by the hands in pity, and led him in, and these rude men, touched by our inexpressibly pitiable condition, made room for us around the little fire. They themselves were wet, it is true, but it was their normal state to be so, for upon Exmoor it always rains. They crowded round Kidd Shinar's umbrella (that was) and around mine, which was entirely paralysed on one side, as though they were unaware of the original intention of umbrellas.

"Ask for a private room," said Shinar, dolefully.

"With turtle and devilled whitebait," added Thompson ;
"do !"

But, room was made for us at the table, presently, and we sat down to cold meat and capital beer. Wherever we sat, or moved, or hung our hats, or coats, or stood still, there was a puddle. Whenever we shook our heads in the negative, a halo of rain-water was cast from them as from a housemaid's mop. Shinar's moustaches hung down perpendicularly from his lip, like those of a Chinese mandarin. After these two men had dined, however, their sentiments and feelings were so greatly changed that they proceeded to contemplate walking a mile and a half up-hill to an open moor whereupon the race-course was, and thither at last they went. As, in the first place, I had not been so cast down by misfortune as they, so I was not now so unduly excited by cold meat and partial dryness as to venture out again unnecessarily, but remained in company with about half of our copper-coloured friends.

They were as fine and intelligent-looking a set of men as I ever saw, and the one or two women among them remarkably bright-eyed and cleanly. There was no drunkenness, to be called so, and very little quarrelling ; but I was told that there were almost as many folks in that Exmoor beerhouse every day as upon this particular occasion. The village, Simonsbath, which will soon be a town, and probably one day a very large one, is at present in its infancy ; but a handsome church is built there, and a parsonage—the clergyman not yet appointed ;* we will hope for a mechanics' institute and lending library in due time. The mines in its neighbourhood have been taken on trial by three of the largest companies in England, and bid fair to make a populous haunt and busy mart of this barren and unproductive moor. I confess that I like the miner, and think him a very civil fellow at bottom. He won't be domineered over, and he won't stand soft soap (nor any other soap to look at him) ;

* This paper was written in 1856.

but when you have drunk out of his own quart pot, and taken a spark from his own short pipe, he is an honest, kind-hearted, sensible person, and has as large a stock of good feelings about him as of bad words. I, for my part, got on capitally with my neighbours on either side ; and, if I did treat them to a glass or two, it was not until I had partaken of their own hospitality first. Their conversation ran for the most part upon the prospects of the pits : "if the lode goes on wedge like, with the smaller end down, why then it soon comes to an end ; but if the small end is uppermost, there's no knowing where it mayn't spread below," they said ; and seemed to take an interest in the matter generally, apart from its relation to themselves. They did not complain much of anything, except of "Capel," who seemed to stand in the way of everybody dreadfully. He made their work harder ; he lowered their wages ; he doubled their toil-time ; and he defrauded, at the same moment, the whole of the three companies. I took him to be some wicked overlooker, or unjust steward, for a long while, until I learned that Capel broke their pick-axes and shovels. When I asked who he really was, in order to expose such a ruffian in the British press, he turned out to be some unpleasant mineral substance, which the miners are constantly coming upon, hard as the iron they are in search of, but not nearly so valuable.

There was a deal of singing going on all this time, for the most part neither spirited, humorous, nor decent ; otherwise the hour passed pleasantly enough, until my two companions returned, if indeed these miseries were they ! If they went out sponges, what marine invective can express their appearance when they got back again ? They were sodden and dripping wet as well ; they were pulp in the third stage, and might have been made into a couple of sheets of foolscap by one process of a paper-machine. They had waded, it seemed, through a marsh and quagmire up to the festive scene, and, bivouacking under a grand stand of five planks which let in the rain, and where refreshments were selling solely in the shape of great sticks of peppermint, they had witnessed a

crowd of ponies start out into the blinding mist, and not come back again. They had waited a reasonable time, allowing for the length of the course, and then returned, concluding that the whole of the competitors were lost. They said that it rained far worse than ever; that they thought they had caught their deaths of cold; and that they were both going to bed immediately. The landlord replied to this, that there was but one bed in the house, and that there was a sick person in it already (a sick person above all that harmony from forty voices!); but that he would lend them such clothes as he had, with pleasure. A little space was cleared in front of the fire, and then and there the man of the law and the man of the sword disrobed and re-arranged themselves; never was metamorphosis more complete. I gave up from that moment every stitch of faith about "once a gentleman always a gentleman," and transformed it, at once, to clothes. I doubt whether even my own appearance—which is eminently aristocratic—could have survived the change.

I shook hands with the more friendly of my copper-coloured companions, and mounted once more behind the dog-cart; the pair in front were as wet as ever in five minutes, and much more ridiculous. I, myself, was little better off, for my already paralysed umbrella got a stroke in its fifth rib, and Thompson drove too quickly to admit of my holding it up properly, and keeping myself on my perch at the same time; he was very savage, and so was the lieutenant. The rain and the wind increased as we topped the moor again, and the mare did not like to face them; an angry man makes but a bad driver; and as she swerved from side to side, then jibbed, then reared, I saw that matters were getting serious. As we were nearing a little bridge upon our way, with a steep bank and a brook upon the right, the creature became quite unmanageable; I jumped out to run to her head, but she was too quick for me; she gave one mad plunge to the left, and, at a sharp cut of the whip in punishment, ran the wheels back to the very parapet, stood

straight up on her hind legs, and fell over—down the height, backward—dog-cart and all. I never expected to see either of my companions alive again, but they fell clear of the vehicle, one on each side of the ditch, and sprang to their feet at once.

“My precious jingo!” exclaimed the lieutenant, not without a touch of gratitude in his tone.

“It was my fault,” said Thompson.

The mare was all this time committing the most determined suicide with her head under water in a narrow ditch; the shafts were broken, but she was sufficiently bound to the cart—poor thing—for it to prevent her rising. We cut her loose and got her up unhurt; that was the sole thing, except our personal safety, to congratulate ourselves upon. The rain was getting a trifle worse, the wind was certainly more violent, we were five miles distant from any house—save that of Mr. Doone’s of Badgerley—upon Exmoor, and it was getting dark.

I have been present during the worst part—the longest half, that is—of a meeting at Exeter Hall. I have heard five Protectionist speakers—one down and the other come on—at an agricultural banquet. I have listened to a Latin declamation at the university, from the lips of a college prizeman. I have heard the same story, for the fourth time, at mess. I was once at a convocation of the clergy of——; but no experience of dreariness and weariness that I can call to mind, endures comparison with our walk home from Exmoor. The mare fell lame, and kept limping and slipping behind us, exciting our wrath and wounding our sympathies at the same time. The men fell lame—Thompson and Shinar—the landlord’s shoes being much too big for them and full of bumps, and presently Shinar lost one of his altogether. Our all having to poke about for that shoe in the wind and the rain, and the mud, and the half-darkness, was a wretched incident; and when he had found it, big as it was, he couldn’t get it on again. None of us spoke, except once; then Thompson, who was much the biggest of the three, enquired, in an awful

kind of murdering voice, which of us had first proposed going to these Exmoor Races? The ravine was on one side of me, with a sheer precipice of fifty feet, and I hastened to lay it all upon the waiter.

“Then I’ll kill that waiter,” said Thompson, solemnly.

“And so will I,” added Lieutenant Shinar.

But neither of them did it, and we wound up that dismal day with a jovial evening, throughout which the spared waiter waited wonderfully.





OUR JERUSALEM PONY.

IN TWO PORTIONS.

Portion I.—How the Promise was Extorted.



AM a medical man, residing, as my wife informs her relatives in the south, "in the neighbourhood of" Edinburgh ; but in point of fact we are *in* it, the nearest villa-residences being thirty streets off at the very least. Our back-green, however, is commodious, and boasts of various fancy animals (principally rabbits) and poultry ; the former of which I use for scientific experiments ; the latter for my table only, although it has been hinted by the malicious that they are made to fulfil double duty. Looking out upon this pleasant expanse of wood and verdure, with its contented denizens, sleeping, or eating, or going through the various interesting processes which result from chemical or chirurgical experiment, I was wont not only to feel the monarch to whom Mr. A. Selkirk compares himself in his somewhat egotistical poem, but to envy no man his ancestral acres, however wide-spreading ; his deer-forests, however fully stocked. I had risen in my profession, not by standing on

my own dignity, as the manner of some is, but by hard work, and, as I flattered myself, usefulness. I was not made dizzy by my elevation, since it had been gradual ; and I reflected with satisfaction, that even if I should be in danger of slipping backwards, I possessed enough of balance to keep me right in that best of makeweights—a balance in my banker's books. When I add that, in addition to these various subjects of congratulation, on a certain evening in July last, I had a mild Havannah in my mouth, and a pair of slippers just at the extremity of my toes, it will be understood by the married portion of my male readers that I was in a disposition peculiarly adapted for subjugation by the female. Leonora, the wife of my bosom for several years, and therefore but too well aware of her opportunities in this respect, was standing behind me, running her fingers through what she considers to be my curls, and dilating pleasantly upon my professional talents and success.

"Alfy," said she, coaxingly, after she had thus laid down the rails, as she thought, for the idea to slip dreamily into my mind, "now you are getting on so well, my love, don't you think that you ought to buy a brougham?"

"Certainly, if you wish it, my dear," returned I, pretending to misunderstand her, and the broad ægis of domestic economy at once placing itself between my pockets and this extravagant proposition ; "buy half-a-dozen brooms if they are necessary, by all means, sweetest ; but I thought we stocked the house when I moved, at your request, from our flat into this main-door."

This shell had such a quantity of rusty nails in it in the form of reminiscence and reminder, that I imagined it would have silenced the enemy's fire altogether ; but no ; that "still small voice" which is never still—the voice of one's wife—again attacked me with the quiet persistence which is its most fatal attribute.

"I meant a carriage, love—a brough-am : a one-horse brougham would be quite enough."

"Why not say Mr. Axle's prize 'drag' at once?" replied

I, laughing, and lighting another cigar: "I'll send round Betsy in the morning, with my compliments, and I'll buy it of him at his own figure."

"It would very much increase your practice," remarked Leonora, musingly; "there's nothing like a carriage for a medical man, you may depend upon *that*; it takes him where skill and talent, even such as yours, Alf, would never carry him."

"Yes, love; it sometimes takes him to prison," remarked I, assentingly. A slight pause here took place, during which I only caught one word of my Leonora's, and even that was not intended for me; it sounded exceedingly like "Fiddlestick." When she recommenced, it was in a graver and less playful tone; Marshal Gyulai superseded, and Marshal Hess in command, with a new set of tactics.

"Do you know how much you spend in the course of the year in cabs, Alfred? *Nothing!* Oh, don't you tell me naughty fibs; you men never can keep any account. What do you say, dear? I can't quite catch what you are saying. *You walk!* Oh, you wicked man, you don't walk from ten to five every day, I'm sure!"

"My love," returned I, kissing her, "my remark was that there is such a thing as a 'bus."

"Very well, Alfred," observed Leonora with a sigh, and as though the discussion was closed; "all I have to say is this, that the child's ankles are going."

"Going!" ejaculated I, with unaffected surprise; "and where are they going to?"

"If the child's being lame for life is a joke, Alfred—as everything seems, indeed, to be a joke to you—it's all well and good, and it doesn't signify."

In that wonderful alembic with which married females are endowed by too bountiful Nature, Leonora distilled a couple of tears, and let them fall.

"He's got the perambulator," observed I, with that calousness to shame which is the husband's only and very inadequate defence, the unwarranted mackintosh in which he

vainly wraps himself from the watery foe ; “ he can keep his ankles from going in that, Leonora, surely.”

“ Betsy won’t push it,” sobbed my wife ; “ she said she’d see the little angel fur-fur-further first. Its only use now is to hold the umbrellas in the lobby.”

“ Then we must turn over a new leaf, and get a page,” returned I, pleasantly.

“ You’ve promised me *him* a long time,” returned the unrelenting Leonora ; “ but I wouldn’t trust that child to be butted about by a page—no, not for millions.”

“ I don’t think so large a temptation will ever be thrown in your way, my love,” remarked I, drily ; “ say ‘ thousands.’ But I tell you what I will do, Lenny ; I’ll get a Jerusalem pony for him.”

“ A pony,” cried she, clapping her hands and shutting up her lachrymal ducts, as if by magic ; “ oh, that’ll be delicious.”

“ A *Jerusalem* pony,” observed I again, with emphasis, and unwilling that an expectation should be aroused of some Arab steed ; “ it will only be a Jerusalem.”

“ I don’t care whether it comes from Jerusalem or not,” replied she, in evident ignorance that the expression was euphuistic for a donkey ; “ I’d just as soon have it from there as from Wales or Shetland.”

“ Ha,” said I ; for I had nothing else to say, since I had not the heart, nor indeed the courage, to undeceive her.

“ And, Alf, darling,” observed she, as she trippingly left the room to communicate this piece of news to her offspring, “ do please, if you possibly can, let it be a piebald.”

“ Very well, my love ; I will, if I possibly can,” returned I ; “ but I confess I do not think it very likely.”

Portion II.—How the Promise was Kept.

On a certain Saturday evening, some time after this conversation, I chanced to be at a small village in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, which forms a sort of watering-place to

that metropolis—that is to say, which boasts of a pier, a wheel-of-fortune, a few bathing-machines, and a stud of Jerusalem ponies ; and on one of those animals I set my eye and my mind.

I made enquiry concerning its merits of the proprietor, who, without giving himself an instant's breath for a comma, and far less for consideration of the facts, deposed—that it was middle-aged, steady, and well conducted, would carry a lady side-ways, didn't know how to startle. Lie down ? Bless you, *never*. A child might ride him a-hunting ; while as for kicking——

It may have been that the philosophic beast was annoyed by so much flattery ; it may have been that fate herself interposed to save my precious infant ; or it may have been a gadfly ; but certain it is that at the word “kicking,” that donkey began a *pas de deux* with its hind-legs, the duration and violence of which I never before saw equalled. “It's only his play ”——began the hypocritical proprietor. I congealed the remainder of his sentence by a glance of incredulous scorn, and requested to see some smaller specimens ; infant donkeys, who had left off milk-diet, but had not yet been taught vicious tricks. Had he any such that he could lay his hand upon his heart and recommend to the father of a young family ? Had he any under a year old ?

The change that came over this garrulous person upon his discovering with whom he had to deal was most remarkable ; from spurious enthusiasm, he sank into downright obstinacy, while he wrangled and disputed with all the tenacity of an ancient sophist.

“Young donkeys ? Of course, he had young donkeys ; scores—hundreds. Under one year old ? Certainly not. How could he have ? Nothing was younger than *one* ? How could it be ?”

The low cunning which overspread the countenance of this dealer in Jerusalem ponies would have shed another halo round any member of the Old Bailey Bar.

I turned away in disgust, and should have departed

donkeyless, but that a *Deus ex machinâ*—a fellow belonging to the bathing-machines—who seemed to know this man and his humour, intervened, and solved the difficulty. He explained to him, with an elaborate patience, which should earn him the lately vacated place in the College of Preceptors, that there was a smaller measure of time than a year, and that a Jerusalem pony might be any number of months old short of a twelvemonth.

I accompanied these two to the donkey emporium, purchased my young ass for ten shillings, hired a boy to lead it home by a straw-halter, and imagined the affair to be concluded. I did not, at that time, estimate the duties of the proprietor of a Jerusalem pony so highly as the privileges. In the first place, in addition to the boy that was hired for money, there were about three-and-twenty others who accompanied us out of the village, for the fun of the thing ; of these, two took their posts, like a guard of honour, on either side of the creature, and encouraged him with unintelligible cries ; a fourth established himself immediately in his rear, and took every opportunity of my eye being diverted from my property to twist its perfectly straight and rather attenuated tail. The rest followed in a disorderly manner at a little distance, addressing either myself or the animal—for, having the misfortune to be an Englishman, I am unacquainted with the Scotch language in its native purity—as “the cuddy,” and taunting me with social pride in not at once getting up on the quadruped’s back and riding home.

These myrmidons deserted us in the course of the journey, but only to be replaced, as we reached Edinburgh, by a much more formidable following. When myself and prize reached our residence in Paradise Row, about eleven o’clock P.M., he had, in addition to his four personal attendants, who had remained faithful, a “tail” of about one hundred people ; including two policemen and three or four highly respectable persons who wanted to go the other way, but who were compelled to follow the stream and accompany *us*.

I had forgotten, when I made my purchase, that our back-

green was, so to speak, down stairs, and only approachable by the area steps and through the kitchen passage ; but often during the course of my triumphal march this difficulty had presented itself to my procrastinating mind, and it had now to be solved : "How were we to get the Jerusalem pony into his uncomatable paddock?" Dearest Leonora was gone to bed ; that was the only bright side the picture at present afforded me. If her reproaches upon the animal not being a piebald had been added to my other annoyances at that moment, I verily believe that I should have given the Jerusalem pony away.

"Come," cried the policeman, as we vainly urged the animal to descend into his future residence, "this won't do, you know ; you must move on, Sir ; you mustn't be obstructing the street." "Obstructing your grandmother," cried I, pale with passion at the idea of the law interfering to oppress what it was intended to protect ; "is there not room in Paradise Row for this poor young creature as well as myself? Move on, indeed ! that is the very thing I want to do ! A 1, take the Jerusalem pony's fore-legs ; A 2, take his hind-quarters, and be very careful ; and carry him down those steps."

"Hooray !" shouted the crowd, in a state of wild excitement, and delighted with my commanding air. I was never in my life in the position of a public and popular character before, but I can now well understand the feelings which prompt the demagogue. I saw the respectable inhabitants of Paradise Row regarding me from their Saturday-night windows, it is true, and I knew that I was losing my practice as a medical man ; but, on the other hand, the cheering rang in my ears like a trumpet voice, and I felt that whatever happened, I was the favourite of the people.

"Take him down," cried I, in a voice of thunder ; "you had better take him down, when I tell you."

"Hooray !" shouted the crowd ; "take him down, or down with the Peelers."

The policemen looked at me, looked at the assembled

thousands—for the street was filled by this time from end to end, and surged into the adjoining squares—looked at one another, and then proceeded to obey me without a murmur. They took up—they had never taken up such a customer before—the astonished quadruped in the manner I had suggested, and carried him safe and sound down the area steps.

While this apparently funereal procession was in progress, a gentleman stepped forward and addressed me with a very excited demeanour : “Excuse me, Sir ; I have but just come, and am unacquainted with the circumstances. You are a medical man, I see ; I am connected with the press, Sir. What *is* the matter, Sir ? *What* has happened ? *Who* is it, Sir ? Is it a lady or a gentleman, and are they dead, or only insensible ?”

“He is a gentleman, and at present speechless,” returned I, hurriedly, as I accompanied the sufferer in question into the house.

Oh, the relief of mind and body when I saw that Jerusalem pony deposited safely in our back-green ! the gratitude with which I overwhelmed those guardians of public safety ! the recklessness of expense with which I opened bottle after bottle of superior beer for their refreshment !

I woke Leonora, to recount to her all that I had done, and had some difficulty to prevent her rushing to the window to look at the new arrival.

“I don’t even know what a Jerusalem pony *is*,” urged she ; “I shall be lying awake, and trying to picture what unusual——”

At this juncture, her doubts were set at rest for ever by the most tremendous braying that ever issued from the mouth of jackass since the days of Balaam ; it was exactly beneath our bed-room window, and sounded like a brass band composed of opicleides out of repair.

“Why, it’s only a dreadful donkey, Alfred,” cried Leonora, with just indignation.

“It’s forty donkeys,” cried I, penitently, and stopping my

ears. Never, indeed, shall I forget that noise, which seems even now to be ringing through the chambers of memory.

We retired to rest, however—that is to say, we lay down and listened. Sometimes we would nourish a faint hope that all was over, that the Jerusalem pony would himself require the blessings of sleep, and become quiet; and sometimes the real horrors of our situation could not be dispelled by any such baseless fancy. I think the creature must have been composing a coronach or lament for his absent mother or other relatives; for after very short pauses, such as might have been given by any donkey to composition, he would burst forth with a torrent of discordant wailing of about fourteen lines in length—as far as we could judge—and ending in an Alexandrine. It was horrible from the first, and rapidly grew to be unbearable. At 2.30 A.M. I put on my dressing-gown and slippers, and taking down the rope from one of the window-curtains, I sallied forth into the back-green. Sleep had of course been banished from every other inhabitant of Paradise Row as well as from ourselves; a score of human heads regarded me from far and near, from first flat to attic, with interest and satisfaction. They believed in their foolish and revengeful hearts, I knew, that I was about to *hang* the Jerusalem pony. I was not going to do anything of the kind.

I approached the animal, uttering sounds such as, in the mouths of his late attendants, I had observed to give him pleasure; but I might just as well have read aloud the Act for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He turned away; he fled; he even lifted up his heels against me. Disgusted, but not dispirited by this conduct, I pursued the flying beast with persevering vigour, despite the fluttering of my lengthy garment, and the increasing coolness of my unprotected legs. I caught him; I tied up his jaws—securely, as I thought—with the curtain-rope; and retired amid murmurs of applause to my apartment, leaving him speechless and discomfited.

Better, far better would it have been had I never attempted this! The great harmonies of Nature are not to

be hushed by the rude hands of Man. Scarcely had my head touched the pillow, when the bray, half-stifled, pitiful, more harassing beyond expression than before, recommenced with hideous pertinacity, and increased in volume with every note. Presently the rope gave way, and the full tide of song burst forth again from that Jerusalem pony as the pent-up waters from an ineffectual dam ; while the cock, imagining, no doubt, that it was dawn, and accusing itself of over-sleeping, and permitting another creature to be the first to salute the sun, added its shrill tribute to the din.

"I'll cut that donkey's throat," cried I, leaping out of bed, and fumbling for a razor ; "the organ is situated so low down his larynx, that nothing less will stop him."

"Give him chloroform," cried Leonora, sarcastically ; "you're so fond of that."

This remark, intended to wound my professional feelings, was, as sometimes happens, the very best advice that could be given to me. I snatched up an enormous phial of that divine essence, and again rushed down to the back-green to silence the domestic enemy. This time, I conquered ; in fifteen minutes — it must be confessed, after tremendous exertion—I was standing in my dressing-gown and slippers upon that prostrate Jerusalem pony like another Rarey ; a victim to science, he reposed like a sleeping infant who has had enough of his bottle.

This victory, achieved in the sight of respectable though sleepless myriads, has been quite an advertisement to me. My practice is increasing, and the child's ankles are being rapidly strengthened. A breach knocked through the wall of our back-green permits the immediate cause of this prosperity to retire, after his daily labours, to a pasture at a considerable distance. Leonora is more than mollified. She has withdrawn the hasty expression once made use of, about something being no more like another thing than a horse-chestnut is like a chestnut-horse, and confesses that a Jerusalem pony is a very good pony after all. Her sole regret now is that he is not a piebald.



TO PERSONS ABOUT TO FURNISH.



HE above heading will be familiar to many readers as having met their eye in the shops of ironmongers, upholsterers, and carpet-warehousemen ; and they that are bachelors, or who live in furnished lodgings, have doubtless been struck by the apparent solemnity of the address. It is indeed calculated to arrest the attention and give pause to the most careless and unreflecting. It has a strong family resemblance to the title-page of a tract. It awakens thoughts upon ways and means, and the desirableness of settling in life, in all those who will soon be going down that hill of which we read in the ballad of *John Anderson*—for “settling,” as on board ship, not uncommonly precedes but by a very little our “going down.” But, with whatever serious images the expression “To Persons about to Furnish” supplies the fancy, they must fall far short of the seriousness of the furnishing itself. The man who has had no practical experience of this matter is as yet imperfectly developed. He has not shared the common lot, he is not a man like his fellows, if he dies unfurnished. The same, too, may be said, although in a less degree, of one who furnishes, being unmarried

"A bachelor employed in such an undertaking," as I was observing to one of my maiden aunts but yesterday, "is an anomaly."

"I have not a doubt of it," replied she, decisively.

"Yes," added I, delighted to meet the views of the old lady (who is funded), "he is quite a *lusus*——"

"Ay," interrupted my aunt, "you may say *that*. I never knew any well-conducted man who set about furnishing without a wife to help him ; you may depend upon it *some* female *must* have a hand in it."

I had been misunderstood in what I was about to observe, but I had elicited a valuable expression of opinion. All women believe that furnishing is one of their peculiar missions ; an occupation for which, as for poking the fire and writing letters, the feminine mind is particularly qualified ; and they go about it with a hideous joy. It is perhaps the only opportunity in their lives of spending money on a large scale ; of bestowing valuable patronage ; and of fully gratifying their love of bargains. With men, on the other hand, furnishing is often only another name for confusion, interruption, debt, duns, indigestion, and the Queen's Bench. Of course, the last synonym is a very unpleasant one, but there is this advantage about it : it does at least end the matter. An execution is put into the house, and all the things so laboriously accumulated are sold at their just value—about a third of what we owe for them. Otherwise, to furnishing there is no end. There is always "a charming bookcase I saw in the shop-window in Oxford Street, wonderfully cheap, my dear, and which will just fit into that empty corner in the boudoir." Mrs. Turtle Dove is always finding something (and bringing it home with her) just to fit a corner. This takes place, however, when the great avalanche of ottomans and tables, of consoles (though why they are called by *that* name, I can't imagine) and *prie-dieux* is over, and when the dropping fire of nick-nacks—"such as everybody *must* have, my love, about a house"—has permanently set in. During the former period, not only has Mr. Turtle Dove to pay enormous prices

for vast pieces of mahogany—beds as big 'as ordinary ships, and wardrobes of the size of aviaries—but he is compelled to go about with his consort, and take an unwilling part in his own ruin.

“Has my own pet,” observes she at the breakfast-table, “got anything *very* particular to do this morning?”

“Nothing particular,” replies Mr. Dove, with studied carelessness. “I have, of course, to go to the office as usual. Why is it that you ask such questions, my dear?”

“Oh, then, we’ll put it off till to-morrow,” returns the lady.

“Put *what* off?” enquires the gentleman, tartly. “I can do anything to-day as well as to-morrow. They are both equally inconvenient.”

“There’s a darling,” exclaims Mrs. Turtle Dove. “*I knew he would*. I want you to come and look at some stair-carpets, my own, that’s all.”

“I have not the slightest desire to look at stair-carpets: pray, please yourself, Mrs. Dove.”

“Well, you see, it’s such a responsibility, my dear. I hardly think you would like me to get the seven-and-six-penny one—which is, moreover, certainly the prettiest.”

“Yes, my dear, you may get that, and have done with it. Now, please to give me my other cup of tea, for the ’bus will be passing directly. I do not consider seven and sixpence dear for a stair-carpet—although, indeed, it is quite enough money.”

“It is seven and sixpence *a yard*, my love,” exclaims Mrs. Turtle Dove; “and thirty-two yards at seven and six—Where are my tables?”

“Twelve pounds for a stair-carpet, Mrs. Dove—why, you must be a lunatic! Where do you suppose I am to get the money from?”

“Well, my dear, I am sure I don’t know. I never did understand money matters; but the carpet man is *so* civil that I am sure he would never want to be paid unless it was quite convenient. Besides, you know, we owe him already for the drawing-room and the li——”

"There now, you've spilt the tea, Charles ; that's what comes of using bad language ; and the washing of a table-cloth comes to something in London, let me tell you ; and yet to grudge me a single morning to come and help me choose a car—car—car——"

"There, my dear, I'll come with you ; only, for Heaven's sake, don't begin to cry. I suppose you won't mind coming down in the 'bus?"

"The 'bus, my love? Well, really, I don't much like a 'bus. And when one is going out furnishing, in particular, it does not look very well, does it, to go in a 'bus? The shopmen will very naturally say : 'Oh, those people can't have very much money to spare ; we must look sharp after *them*.' Now, I think, on the contrary, if we had a brougham—— There, don't get in a passion, Mr. Dove ; a cab, if you like, then—anything to oblige you. Let us go in a cab together—it is always a pleasure to drive about with you, my dear."

Mr. and Mrs. Turtle Dove arrive at the carpet warehouse. Mrs. D. spends two hours and a half in seeing every bale in the establishment rolled out before her, and in employing every description of shopmen. Mr. Dove is dazed with the colours, and finally sits down, collapsed, on a heap of carpet.

"Now, which have you set your affections upon, Mr. Dove, eh?" observes the lady sharply, and as if to reprove him for his lassitude.

Mr. Dove has no definite recollection of any pattern except the one which he saw first, and he therefore feebly proclaims his preference for that above all others.

"Now, that is just because it's cheap, Mr. Dove. That is so like you. Do you know that this is made by steam-power, and not by hand-loom, and wouldn't last a week? Am I not right, Mr. Kidderminster?"

The obsequious Kidderminster hastens to corroborate this statement. "The cheapest carpet," observes he to Mr. Turtle Dove, pityingly, as though that gentleman were an idiot, "is not always the best, Sir."

"There, do you hear *that*, Mr. Dove? Now, to my mind,

this red and white, and this green one, are the two best suited for our purpose."

"You will find them admirable wear, Madam, and will never repent your choice," remarks Mr. Kidderminster mechanically, and as though he were repeating the responses in church.

"And now, Mr. Dove, which of the two shall it be? What say you?"

"Oh, the red and white," cries he despairingly, and crushing his hat on for departure.

"Didn't I think so?" exclaims his better half triumphantly. "Ah, what would you do without me, my dear? You never thought of the cover!"

"Cover!" returns Mr. D., stung to life by the contemptuous expression upon the shopman's countenance, "what cover?"

"Why, the holland cover which every stair-carpet *must* have on when people are not expected, my love. Don't you see that the white holland would not contrast with the edging of the carpet you have chosen? It must, therefore, be the green carpet. And now, Mr. Kidderminster, please to show us your patterns of hollands."

This is only one example of the duplicate system that prevails in furnishing, but I could have brought forward hundreds. You must get the very best things—for "depend upon it that the best things are always the cheapest in the end, my love"—and then you must get cases to cover them up with. Damask chairs, and chintz to hide the damask; mahogany tables, and covers to preserve the mahogany; Turkey carpets, and druggets to save the carpets. Nay, even then, Mr. Turtle Dove is not always permitted to make use of the furniture.

"Goodness gracious, my dear Charles, do, pray, put a newspaper under your feet, before you lie down upon that chintz sofa;" and when Charles has done so with infinite trouble, or, at all events, to the loss of all luxurious sensation of immediate repose, she comes and lays a horrible net under his head, called an antimacassar, which prints its pattern off upon whichever cheek has the misfortune to rest upon it.

It would be treason to divulge how often Mr. Turtle Dove, in secret, sighs, I do not say for the turn-up bedstead of Bachelordom, but for the less gorgeous sofa of early married life, when he lived in lodgings, and might do as he liked with the hired furniture.

While the two Turtle Doves are thus engaged in lining their nest, it is hard upon the male bird that he never obtains the slightest credit for his share of the performance. He is compelled to accompany Mrs. D., in order that she may commit her extravagances under his extorted sanction, but she acts in reality independently of him. She carries him about with her rather as a subjugated prince than as a sovereign with the right of veto. As in the carpet business, so in every other transaction, she allies herself with the shopmen against her liege lord and master. Mahogany, say they, and she agrees with them, is, on the whole, cheaper than plain deal, even for the nursery.

"Deal lasts no time, you hear, my love. Now, you wouldn't wish me to be *buying all these things again*, Charles, in a couple of years, *would you?*" To which, with a ghastly smile, Mr. Dove replies he certainly should not.

At the same time, Mrs. Dove takes much credit to herself in that she does not furnish the attic chambers with wardrobes in carved oak, "as some wives would, and think nothing of it;" and if she rejects a set of drawing-room curtains that would suit a duchess, for some becoming the reception-room of a banker's wife, she prides herself upon hitting the Golden Mean.

Mr. Turtle Dove is not permitted to go furnishing by himself, for the lady says he is sure to be imposed upon; but at the same time she taunts him upon his inactivity. "Mr. Turtle Dove has bought nothing but the hall table and chairs," says she, "and the table has no drawer in it. Fancy a hall table without any drawer! Poor dear Charles, he means well, bless him! but as to *Furnishing*—why the very table doesn't stand straight, and one of the chairs is quite rickety."

Furnishing, as I have already observed, can never be said

to end, but its oppression is most seriously felt during the first six months of the process. Sleep during that period is cut short at untimely hours by people who want to measure the double wash-hand stand for an article to put between it and the wall "to save the paper;" or who are desirous to "match" the soap-dish. Dinner, in any high sense, is not to be got, because one has to jump up half-a-dozen times during its performance to witness in tradesmen's books that such and such things have been delivered, of the very nature and existence of which Mr. Turtle Dove has never heard. Upon one occasion, an implement, carried with difficulty by two persons, and resembling the pendulum of a gigantic clock, arrived at his house, in connection with which he signed a memorandum that the salamander had been received. He naturally thought they had mistaken his residence for the Zoological Gardens.

But even when the more indispensable articles have arrived, Mrs. Turtle Dove and her olive-branches are continually coming home with "something towards the drawing-room," which "she could not resist," and which our little Harriet Frances, with an intelligence beyond her years—and the same disregard to cost which distinguishes her beloved mother—has espied in a shop window. Mrs. Turtle Dove's actual furnishing excursions—I mean those visits which she makes with the express purpose and *malice prepense* of "getting things" will sometimes extend over a twelvemonth, but after that period she does think it necessary to make some kind of apology.

"I should not have gone, my dear—for nothing I hate so much as to run you into unnecessary expenses—I should not have gone furnishing any more, had it not been for that gap on the drawing-room mantelpiece, between the lustre and the clock on the left-hand side; the one on the right my Uncle Henry filled up with that pretty Undine; and I thought that it would be only common civility—don't you think so, love?—after his great kindness, to get a companion for it."

"And do you mean to say, Mrs. Turtle Dove, that you

have been from here to Regent Street after a superfluous china ornament?"

"Yes, indeed, my dear; and I think you will say I have been very successful. Here it is — a sea-nymph with her shell. Isn't it lovely?"

"What did you give for it, Mrs. Turtle Dove?"

"Well, now, you guess?—it was quite a bargain. Look at the shell alone—why, you can scarcely tell it from a real one."

"You could have got a real one of that kind for threepence or fourpence, so I hope that the imitation one was cheaper."

"Threepence or fourpence! — I am astonished at you, Charles. But consider the sea-nymph. Is it not beautifully chaste?"

"I dare say she has her virtues; but I want to know how much you gave for her, Mrs. Turtle Dove?"

"Well, I gave thirty shillings, my love. Think of that! The man wanted thirty shillings and sixpence; only I beat him down."

"And what did you give for cabs?"

"Well, dearest, I wanted to be economical, so I took the cab by the hour, and — being so anxious to please my Charley — I was some time choosing it, so that it took two hours altogether."

"Humph! then it cost you four shillings, did it?"

"Yes, darling, only these cabmen are such cheats. You know, I was anxious to get home, love, so I said, 'You won't be long, will you?' when I got in; and just because of that he charged me two shillings extra, saying that I had told him to drive fast."

"Very good, Mrs. Turtle Dove. Then you gave him *six* shillings, did you?"

"Well, love, I was obliged to do so, you see. But isn't it chaste?"

"Thirty shillings for the superfluous china ornament, and six shillings for fetching it! That is to say, twenty per cent. upon your unnecessary purchase, Mrs. Turtle Dove. You

certainly are a pattern of economy. Now, how do you think that would look upon a mantelpiece in the Queen's Bench? No, it's no use kissing me, Mrs. Turtle Dove; and I am not 'a dear darling old fidget about money-matters,' nor anything of the sort."

"Well, I was almost afraid you would be angry about it, Mr. Turtle Dove. But you must allow it's beautifully chaste."

Finally, when the Furnishing is really done, Mr. Turtle Dove will find that he is by no means "out of the wood" even then. The windows must not be opened, because the dust will get in upon the carpet; the shutters must be closed, lest the sun should have a deleterious effect upon the curtains; so that not only is the atmosphere of his residence a little close, but he partakes of breakfast and luncheon in total obscurity. Moreover, but too often Mrs. Turtle Dove becomes a prey to the designing. Upon one occasion, when Mr. D. returns from his office, he finds that lady in a state of uncommon exhilaration. She leads him up to a sculptured leaf upon the new dining sideboard, and exclaims triumphantly: "And now, my dear, what *do* you think of *that*?"

"It's a leaf," says he; "but I am sure I don't know what leaf."

"But the polish—look at the polish, love. Do you think that either oil or varnish could have given that?"

"Perhaps not, my dear; but neither would they have left such a very unpleasant smell."

"It is rather strong," she admits, "but the professor assured me that it will go off after a day or two."

"The professor! What professor?"

"Professor Shinee, of St. Petersburg. He speaks English like a native. He is the sole inventor of the—I forget the name—but this is one of his cases of bottles. You save so much by buying a quantity at a time. He can't afford, poor fellow, to take out a patent or set up a shop. He goes about with nothing in the world but a case of bottles, a handkerchief on his left arm, and a little bit of flannel."

"What ! nothing else *on* ?" asks Mr. Turtle Dove.

"He was dressed, of course, my dear, but even that inadequately. I particularly observed an absence of shirt-collar. But only think of that case of bottles for eight shillings !"

"Good Heavens," exclaims Mr. Turtle Dove, "eight shillings—*eight* !"

"Ah ! I thought you would be astonished. Didn't I say so, Harriet Frances ? Isn't it cheap ?"

"I tell you what," returns Mr. Turtle Dove, gravely, "it is not only *not* cheap, and very dear, but it is also excessively dangerous. No, I don't mean explosive, Madam—although it may be *that*, for all I know—but burglarious. That man came for the spoons, and for the forks, and for the silk umbrellas. Is there nothing missing ? Very likely not, but there will be. He has taken away the plan of the house in his head. All the other houses in the crescent are the fac-similes of our own. By indiscreetly admitting that vagabond, you have not only exposed yourself and family to robbery and murder, but imperilled the safety of seven-and-fifty respectable householders."

Whether the evil prophecy of Mr. Turtle Dove ever comes to pass or not, its fulfilment is always being anticipated ; and in the meantime the smell of the patent indestructible polish continues unabated. To pursue its application under such circumstances is out of the question. Therefore the leaf to which it was applied glitters in solitary splendour, causing every incautious beholder to enquire why the rest of the side-board looks so dull.

There are many incidental unpleasantries connected with this painful subject, but I confine myself to those which *must* happen, more or less, to all "persons about to furnish." For every ten persons, for instance, before whom a tradesman bows in silent gratitude as they leave his establishment, after giving a furnishing order, there are ninety who have to submit to the following indignity :—

"I beg your pardon, Sir,"—for he always addresses the

male Dove upon the question of finance,—“but in the case of strangers, we generally require a reference.”

Nay, happy may that stranger consider himself, to whom, when he has replied, with offended dignity, “Mr. Jones, of Belgravia,” a second and still more inquisitive observation shall not be presented. “Thank you, Sir, but we do not know Mr. Jones. Could you be so kind as to favour us with the address of your solicitor?”

Have I exaggerated or set down aught in malice upon this dread subject? I appeal to the Paterfamilias of England; they will bear me out in all things, I’m sure, and even add that I have understated the case. Oh! ye that are yet bachelors, look before you leap into the gulf of matrimony, look narrowly for a woman that has got a furnished house—it is better than much fine gold. And you, ye married men, who live in lodgings, and are inclined to find fault because the furniture is a little dirty or rickety, beware—beware, and rather suffer those small ills ye have, than fly to others that ye know not of. Better is a horse-hair sofa and a full-length attitude, than much damask and anti-macassars therewith. Your curtains may be indifferent, but then they will stand tobacco-smoke. What has been viciously observed by Mr. *Punch* in reference to matrimony, that I repeat in all benevolence, with respect to this matter, “To persons about to furnish—*Don’t*”



PICNICS.

THIS is not a pretty word by any means, nor, so far as I know, a very expressive one ; and yet, what pleasant memories it awakens ! As I never can see a hearse, with red-nosed driver, and all the paraphernalia of simulated sorrow — sadder to think upon than even that heavy vacant burden within—without my mind reverting at once to the thoughtless merry time when I was a school-boy, and managed to be present at a certain Derby, by paying half-a-crown for the privilege of clinging to a funeral plume ; as I never smell a herring, fresh or otherwise, but the waving woods of Inverary, and the long blue waters of Loch Fyne, pass before me like a dissolving view, with all their summer prime of youth and pleasure ; so, at this word picnic, formed of two ill-assorted monosyllables, I hear the distant murmur of the seas, and the hurry of shadowy rivers, and the trumpets of the bees upon moorlands, and the whisper of autumn woods, with the voices and the laughter of those I love, ringing, year beyond year, through all. There are but few touchstones of our poor human hearts which can elicit any past remembrance wholly without pain ; but I think this simple word, that is born of

pleasure, and nicknamed in drollery, is one : poverty, ill-humour, illness, all things that deform or embitter our existences, are forgotten in the sound. Care, it is said, killed a cat ; but I never heard of its having hurt a picnic : otherwise, the salt would not be left behind so often. Mirth—if he travels even in the hamper with the bottles—is sure to be there ; love, who is very light and portable, is carried by the ladies ; appetite, like charity, never faileth ; and digestion—well, digestion sometimes comes to a picnic a little late, in consequence of having been obliged to go back for the dinner pills.

I have sat at rich men's feasts, which were partaken of in the open air, whereat powdered footmen have waited upon us decorously, and a bishop said grace ; where every one had a cushion to sit upon, and a napkin folded upon his plate ; but I scarcely call that picnicking. And I have taken my repast—brown bread, and eggs and onions, with a flask of the most ordinary wine—outside Disentis, in the valley of the Grisons, and ate it upon the hillside by myself, because the town, and the inn, and the people all smelt so execrably ; but I don't consider that a picnic either. I have been one of a party of three hundred, whose various contributions to the common stock have been decided upon three weeks before the day of meeting, at a lottery, wherein mustard, and bread, and pepper were the prizes ; where there were two military bands to dance to, under a thousand Chinese lanterns ; where champagne corks went off like platoon-firing ; and where it took half an American lake to ice the wine. And I have joined mighty pleasure companies of the people, where everybody kept his food in his pocket handkerchief ; and having cut it up with clasp knives, and devoured it, seized everybody else's hands, and ran down grassy hills at speed ; but these things, too, I consider foreign to the picnic, which seems, somehow, to signify something snug and well selected, and quite at variance with monster meetings of any sort.

A picnic should be composed principally of young men and young women ; but two or three old male folks may be

admitted, if *very* good-humoured ; a few pleasant children ; and one—only one, dear old lady : to her let the whole commissariat department be entrusted by the entire assembly beforehand ; and give her the utmost powers of a dictatress, for so shall nothing we want be left at home. It is not “fun” to find one’s self without mint-sauce to his cold lamb ; nobody, who is properly constituted, enjoys lobster without fresh butter ; and when you are fond of salad, it is not cheerful to find the bottle of dressing, which was entrusted to young Master Brown, has broken in his filthy pocket : these things all occur, unless we have our (one) dear old lady. Who else would have seen to that hamper of glass being packed with such consummate judgment ? Who else would have brought the plate—I confess I dislike steel forks—in her own private bag ? Who else could have so piled tart upon tart without a crack or a cranny for the rich red juice to well through ? Who else has the art of preserving Devonshire cream in a can ? Observe her little bottle of cayenne-pepper ! Mark each individual cruet as it gleams forth from its separate receptacle ! Look at the salt-box !—look at the corkscrew ! Bless her dear old heart ! she has forgotten nothing. However humble the meal, let it be complete ; and it can’t be complete without its (one) dear old lady.

The girl with the prettiest hands will be generally found—in accordance with the eternal fitness of things—concocting the claret cup ; the young man—the one young man, who should have the sole charge of the bottle department, and who must not be her lover—assisting her. Lemonade and claret is the best mixture for ladies, if you have no “cup ;” and beer, remember, in stone bottles is almost always flat. Let there be plenty of railway wrappers to sit and loll upon ; for in most of nature’s *salles à manger*, and by the sea-coast especially, the seats and couches are hard, and at times damp. I had the mark of a plum-pudding stone—which I was not born with, but which I thought I should carry to my grave—most firmly impressed upon me, until quite lately, the consequence of an open-air entertainment in the beginning of

last autumn. If there is the slightest chance of people being dull, take the last new poem (I have heard better criticism again and again, *sub Jove*, than that of the weekly dispensers of immortality), take a flute—a cornet, if there is an echo—take a sketch-book or two, for they often suggest, and never interrupt conversation; and, if the company be very larky, and rather unintellectual, take the Racing Game, or a pack of cards. Don't be too polite, for drawing-room manners are out of place at a picnic; but do your very best, either in carving the chicken, or in saying good things, according to your gifts. And, by-the-bye, if there is anything forgotten, after all, don't send the most amusing person you've got back for it, because he is the youngest or the poorest; for that, as the mathematicians say, is a great waste of power; but let the stout, rich party go instead, who is as much out of his element among you as an aide-de-camp at church. If you are by the sea-side, be very careful not to break the bottles; for when they are empty and well-corked, they swim in the water capitably, and afford excellent objects for pebble-throwing to both sexes. If there be any servants, drivers, or boatmen, don't forget that they appreciate having the things left for them unhacked and tolerably neat; and if they take your places, don't put everything of value out of sight, as though you were afraid of their stealing them. Let the gentlemen withdraw themselves, after dinner, from the weaker vessels who can't stand smoke, and enjoy their cigars; the (one) dear old lady, aided by her obedient and neat-handed Philisles, will, during that period, be putting the crockery back again, and the plate into her private bag; and that will be the time, also, you will be remarked upon if you have monopolised the most comfortable place during the meal, or have spoiled a dress through clumsiness, or have been eating rapidly in order to secure two helps of cream.

It is now, when the glory of landscape or of ocean stretches before you, and your every sense is satisfied, that you must feel, if ever, benevolence towards the whole human race, friendship for those present, and love for one (at least) of

them ; it is the period for affectionate thought and conversation ; the time

“ To glance from theme to theme,
Discuss the books to love or hate,
To touch the changes of the state,
Or thread some deep Socratic dream.”

How well the poet, from whom these words are borrowed, has understood this matter, he and his beloved friend, who found the shadows of the wych-elms and the towering sycamore so fair after the dust, and din, and steam of town ; who, bearing all that weight of learning lightly, like a flower, brought an eye for all he saw, and mixed in all the simple out-door gambols ; who fed both heart and ear of the charmed circle, as they lay and listened to his reading, on the lawn ; who loved himself to listen while the maiden flung her ballad to the brightening moon, the while the stream ran on, the wine-flask lying couched in moss, or cooled within its glooming wave ; and last, returning from afar, before the crimson-circled star had fallen into her father's grave, and brushing ankle-deep in flowers, they heard behind the woodbine veil the milk that bubbled in the pail, and buzzings of the honeyed hours ; they went home—that is to say, to tea, wherein they showed their wisdom.

My own first recollections of a course of picnics are derived from those, in my boyhood, held at Cliefden Spring, upon the river Thames, near Maidenhead. I was then an Eton boy, and my family living in that vicinity, some half-a-dozen of my schoolfellows, or so, good oars, and most of them good voices, would often row up and spend the day with us at home. Saints' days were blessed days in those times. Up the fair broad river in a six-oar, with nothing on to speak of, was fine travelling upon an early summer morning ; the right Royal Castle looking down upon us from afar ; the flat green meadows upon this side, and the osier banks on that, and the little wooded islands in the midst, so gallantly stemming the tide. Here we delayed to bathe, and there to beer ; here,

where the tow-rope took off our straw-hats, to chaff and counter-chaff the bargemen, and there to put our flannel shirts on decently before the ladies met us at the old gray bridge ; then, on with our fair burden, through the locks, wherein, as the boat sank with the sinking waters, we sang our glees ; and again delayed by the wet clinging lilies, which were woven into chaplets—bless the weavers' innocent hearts !—for our young brows ; and by the swans delayed, which, as we neared their nests among the reeds, flapped out on mighty wings, and hissed their fiercest. So we reached Cliefden Spring, beneath the hanging woods of Cliefden, and by the river side. What appetites we brought then to those feasts ! what merriment ! ah, me, what youth !

I remember one young after-dinner boaster of us, who, speaking of the great walks thereabouts, observed that they were nothing compared to the extent of those about his place at home. "There's one, a gravel one," he said, "that you may walk ten miles upon, and never leave it." The ladies blushed and smiled. We boys, with swollen cheeks, remarked : "O yes," and "We should rather like to see it ;" but one, who was the wisest of us, winked and said : "Ah, Longbow *major* means ten miles *backwards and forwards* ;" at which we laughed the laugh of those blithe days.

I have picnicked for almost a summer long among the Channel Islands ; and there are no better places for this pleasure than those. There is a certain ivy-mantled, wood-surrounded tower in Jersey, from which almost the entire island, the whole great STATE—which coins its own half-pennies—can be surveyed. The tiny roads that thread it in and out, shut in by honeysuckle hedges ; the avenues that lead to the old seignuries ; the small green valleys, where the beautiful cattle feed ; the mighty ruined castle by the sea ; you may sit and see it all from the tower, smoking your great penny cigar, after your good bottle of claret at 1s. 9d., after your peerless Jersey lobsters, your unexcelled green figs, your peach unrivalled, and your sanspareil pear. Or will you prefer Grève au l'Anchon (of sand eels), where the white sand

sparkles for such a distance eastward, and the forsaken pools are like mirrors ; where the mighty caverns will shelter you from the sun, and the spring water leaps from the rock to mix with that brandy which is so cheap, and not British ? Or, again, will you choose the tremendous headland, Grosnez, that juts out nose-like into the ocean, almost close under which the low coast of France seems to smile invitingly, whither those exiles yonder are straining their eager eyes ? We have dined in these fair spots as merrily as anywhere, and amongst pleasant Jersey faces, as kindly as any in broad Britain. Ah ! happy island days ! our canopy, the sky without a cloud ; our banquet-hall, the cliffs above the sunlit sea !

Lastly, omitting many a forest meal, and many a spread upon the ruined ramparts of the Dane and Roman, in shells of ancient castles and upon decks of yachts at sea, let me recall one picnic more. From where I sit and write—between the oaks and across the little harbour with its angry bar—I see the very place where we, we thirteen, dined ; upon the beach yonder in the fifth cove of the red cliff-bound bay. You cannot pass to it by land save at mid-tide and after, because of these four headlands which reach so far into the sea. Starting at half-ebb, therefore we took boat and sailed thither, determining to walk home round the points. The sandy bay we had chosen for debarkation was so flat that the boat could not come in, and we chivalrous men had to get out and drag it—with the ladies in it—high and dry. There was a mighty archway, cut by that laborious handicraftsman, Ocean, through which the beautiful village we had lately left, the wooded cliffs beyond it, and the channel-stream with white sailed ships, were seen as in a picture ; in the foreground, too, was a mighty fallen fragment, resembling, almost minutely, that statue, brave and pitiful, of the Dying Gladiator—Nature, as it really seemed, playing the painter and the sculptor, and putting both arts to shame. The sketch-books were produced of course, at once, and it was decided here to dine.

There was a doubt amongst the superstitious whether we

should not ask the old boatman to make us up fourteen ; but finally, he was paid and sent away.

"Be sure, gents," were his last words, "not to start later than four o'clock ; and even then you'll get your feet wet round the last point, perhaps." And the "gents," thinking he only wanted to frighten them, and get another job, replied : "O yes, bother the time !" as though ten minutes' unpunctuality in the matter would not have been our death-doom, with the spring-tide rising thirty feet, and we shut out from life by a sheer wall of cliff which rose five hundred.

We laughed, and talked, drew and painted, climbed rocks, explored caverns, and dined ; the time flying on at average picnic speed, and even quicker. There wanted but a quarter to the fatal hour, and there was not a thing packed up ; the most philosophic of our party, too, had only just lighted his second cigar, over which he was accustomed to form his judgment upon all things, and we did not dare disturb him. It was five minutes past the hour when we all started, slow and hamper laden, for home. By skipping round the first point from stone to stone, we managed to clear it dryshod ; but the tide was coming in apace, we saw, and I heard somebody say, in a hollow voice, that something would come of our having been thirteen at dinner.

Round the next headland we had to wade knee-deep, and carry the ladies pick-a-back. We ran on over the intervening sand at quickest speed, for we knew our case was getting very hazardous, and found at the third point the water was up to our waists. There was but one promontory more, and that once rounded, we knew that we should be in safety. We *must* effect that passage, for, as we were well aware, we were cut off by the remorseless waves from all retreat—even to that strip of beach where we had dined, and where, indeed, the surrounding rocks were just as precipitous as elsewhere. We found the tide at the last point six feet in, at least, and quite unfordable. A look of unutterable horror stole over every face ; the philosopher dropped his hamper of crockery with a tremendous crash upon the shingle. "It's no use my bother-

ing myself with *that* any further, at all events." No statement, however solemn, not even "this all comes of our having been thirteen at dinner," which here again tolled forth, could have had a more awful effect upon us than this, for we knew that he had had his second cigar, and that his judgment was perfected.

There was a little rock some twelve feet in the sea, which would not be covered over for an hour perhaps, and thither, with mournful hearts, we waded, to eke our lives out by that scanty space. I, too, had a good mind to let that heavy young person whom I had hitherto supported on my shoulders get there unassisted, as she was only going to be kept dry for so short a time : it was very lucky that my good nature prevailed, for behind the rock lay our good old boatman in his wherry, concealed and laughing to himself.

"Ah, I thought you'd get your feet wet round the point, gents ; so I just waited here, in case you might want me."

The heavy young person threw her arms about him there and then and kissed him ; and for my part, I shall not forget him either, nor that spring-tide autumn picnic, although the mark of the plum-pudding stone has, as I have said, by this time paled away.





COMMON SENSE.

66 **T**HE Popkineses have a good deal of talent about them, but they have no common sense," is the verdict universally passed upon our family; and it is a just one: everybody says so; and what everybody says—it stands to common sense—must be true. The virtue expired with a certain clerical ancestor of ours, a sort of Vicar of Bray, who under the Houses of Cromwell, Stuart, and Hanover, was never out of favour with the reigning powers, and who at last, like a jolly fat canon as he was, went off peaceably in his stall. He could "seek the Lord" with armour on, perform the lighted candle and genuflexion business, or vex the soul of the *habitans in sicco* of the period with Protestant oratory, all equally well. He was a man of the strongest common sense, and died worth £30,000; and "Where would you be without him?" is a remark I have frequently made to members of my family, when they have been inclined to question his principles. It is quite certain that none of his descendants would have ever made *that* money: his second son was put into a madhouse, and ended there, because he was always experimentalising with fire and water, and persisted in asserting that carriages could

be moved without horses ; another member of his race proposed to keep off smallpox by means of the intervention of a cow - and a third spent a good deal of his time in building a room to sit in under water. There was a good deal of a certain sort of talent in all these persons ; but what is so much to be regretted is, that what they did was contrary to common sense : the world never forgave them for it to their dying day. My father, who might have stepped into a family living of £800 a year, as soon as he left college, chose instead to join a marching regiment, and live in that, upon £90 per annum besides his pay, because he had religious scruples. Now, in the first place, all scruples are foolish ; and religious scruples are worse than foolish—they're wicked ; and in the next place, the living actually went out of the family ! What harm would my governor have done to it ? He was not an infidel—he was not a Radical—he was not a grossly immoral person ; he would have hunted, I suppose, and shot, and fished—occupations which he delighted in, very naturally, more than in anything else in the world ; and as for visiting the poor people, which, it seems, he considered himself unfitted for, why, he might have got a curate to do all that, paying him very handsomely, and still receiving £740 out of the living. He could have bought most excellent sermons—and it stands to common sense that these must be much better than what one makes for himself ; he could—— But, in fine, he lost everything, and did nothing, all through having scruples, or, which is the same thing, from the want of a little common sense. With all my regard for the governor, it positively makes me mad to think of what he threw away ; not only the actual advantages, but the chances. Why, with our connection—I've got two first cousins in the House of Peers, and our arms are the same as the Premier's—he might have been made a bishop, or even an archbishop—who knows ?—the spiritual shepherd of the Church of England, with six-and-twenty thousand pounds a year ! But then, he never could have said "*Nolo Episcopari*," for he had not the common sense for it.

Then my mother, she was my father's cousin, and a regular Popkins. At twenty-one years of age, and one of six, she refused Sir Tattenham Leger, a man who owned half a county, and was indirectly connected with the Royal Family. Are you and I, my Public, going to believe that any reasons, any possible circumstances, could have justified such conduct as that? I put aside the direct injustice done to myself; but was it the right thing for any woman to do, who contemplated the possibility of ever having children? What had she to urge against the man? His age? His somewhat convivial language? The absurd story of his having broken the hearts of his two former wives? The haughtiness which rather became a person of his rank and influence than otherwise? Nothing of the sort. "I love dear Cousin Henry, and he loves me;" that was her sole objection; and my uncle—Percival Popkins—positively let her have her way. Now, only mark the consequences: the baronet was seventy-five, and died the very next winter. Why, in the name of common sense, didn't she marry him first, and my father afterwards? She would then have had a title, a park, and a town house. As it was, my beloved parents lived in barracks, and in barracks was the writer of this paper born. I positively believe that sometimes in the course of their wandering, and while my father was a subaltern, a curtain drawn across the apartment formed the sole partition between their sitting-room and bed-room. Now, is there a human being endowed with common sense who believes that love, or indeed any other mere sentiment whatever, could have compensated for such a position as that?

When my grandfather died—who had changed his name for that of Walker, and who was, I am thankful to say, the director of a joint-stock bank—we came into a property, and my father sold his commission. And how did Captain Popkins do that? By giving out that he was quite undecided about leaving the regiment, but was ready to go if the juniors made it worth his while? By getting an extra three hundred or so out of the first purchasing lieutenant, two

hundred out of the next, and so on, with nice little pickings from the first purchasing ensign, in the usual way? Quite the reverse! he sold his captain's commission—if you can believe such madness—for regulation price! Why? Oh, don't ask *me*, or I shall lose my temper: the high-flown considerations upon which my father acts, are, I am happy to say, quite out of *my* range of vision. I am no genius, thank goodness, but I do think I have a little common sense; I think I know the world; I believe I know the value of money. The idea of a man sinking £30,000, as my father did, in the Funds and an estate in Westmoreland!

"Why, Sir," said I, in remonstrance—for I know, I hope, how to be respectful to a parent, whatever may be his follies—"in these railway days, you might double, or at least make ever so much more out of that money."

"I don't want any more, Bob," answered my father.

Now, think of a person, sane, or at least not in confinement, openly avowing that he did not want any more money!

"Sir," replied I, with a little of that tact which—perhaps partial—friends have generally allowed me to possess, "I was thinking of your responsibilities. Consider how much more good you might do with double your income!"

Sometimes—I never can quite account for it—when I am talking to the governor, there comes over his face just such an expression as a very clever fellow might wear when a second-rate man is trying to do him, and he wore it just then very decidedly.

"Do you think that likely, Bob?" said he, silyly. "How much do you spend a year in the practice of benevolence?"

"Sir," replied I—and I felt somehow hot all over—"I hold that indiscriminate charity——"

"Stop, Bob," said the governor, interrupting; "we won't enter into that subject. If I were to double your allowance, do you think you would spend twice as much in doing good? You seem to have a doubt about that; so have I. If the reason you urge in favour of speculation be valid—though most speculators, I am afraid, Bob, are far from having such

noble aims as yourself—ought not the recipients of our present bounty to be consulted before we risk their interests? For, if we fail, they fail; and when we succeed, Bob, we may sometimes forget to pay them their full dividends. You know we read that it's very hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

"Well, father," said I, "I am sorry I spoke to you."

Nothing gives me such a tremor—for my disposition is naturally reverential—as to hear the Scriptures referred to in the affairs of this world. I always attend my parish church, I hope, every Sunday, wet or fine, and listen to all the clergyman has to say; but it's not a layman's place, that's my opinion, to go preaching and teaching to people out of the Bible upon weekdays. It has the very worst effects upon the lower classes, I'm confident; for I knew a tinker once who held the abominable doctrine, that one man was as good as another, and who had the blasphemy to tell me that he learned that for himself out of the New Testament. Of course there are expressions in it, here and there, about rich men and so on, but it stands to common sense that one isn't to take them literally. The idea, for instance, of it being my duty to give a half-naked fellow on the road one of the great coats I'm sitting upon, is simply preposterous. What becomes of the rights of property? What becomes of political economy? What becomes, I should like to know, of common sense itself? Why doesn't my governor—if it comes to that—give all he's got to the poor? Why doesn't he cast his last shilling into the treasury, like the poor widow in the parable—which was a pretty example of political economy, by-the-by—and let us all come upon the parish at once? That would be being consistent, that would; and consistency I hold to be the very next best thing to common sense.

I hope I am a better Christian than to call my Brother John a fool; but I can't help having my own opinion about him for all that. He and his wife are absolutely living—no, existing—upon £250 per annum in a cottage close to my father's house. I think I know my duty to society, to the

circle in which I move, better than to propose to any woman unless I have a thousand a year to offer her at the very least. I feel my responsibilities, I trust, sufficiently strongly not to dream of asking her to live in the country unless I could keep her a carriage and pair. Even on the excellent salary I am now receiving at the Bank, I calculate that I shall not be in a condition to fall in love until I am fifty, when I may be depended upon so to do with some person of property and connection ; by that time, John will have had six children, and have sunk in the social scale two degrees at least. It is of no use for him to say that he does not care a fourpenny-piece for the social scale, because that isn't common sense. A man may say that he likes beer better than wine (John does) ; but I am not going to believe him any the more for that ; that's what I tell my Brother John ; for it's hard if one can't say what one likes to a younger brother with £250 a year, and a family too—whenever he tries to humbug one.

“Liberty and the beauties of nature,” said he, upon one occasion, “make up to me for the absence of all luxuries which I could procure only at their expense. You don't appreciate my pleasures — pleasures is a faint word for them—any more than I appreciate yours, Bob.”

I knew what he meant by all this ; he meant lakes, and sunsets, and mountains, and birds, and books—in a word, what is called poetry. Now, I have read *Lalla Rookh* myself — for I have always made it a point to be well informed—and I own that that sort of thing is pretty enough ; but the idea of poetry having anything to do with real life !—that's where John shows his utter disregard of common sense. “Now, poets”—this is what I told him—“never possess any: your geniuses are for ever in gaol, John ; every sense but common sense, that's what all you fellows have.”

“We have common sense, too,” replied he, as cool as a cucumber ; “and if we could derive a satisfaction from the results of a clever stroke of business, made piquant perhaps by the least tinge of dishonesty, not only equal to that ex-

perienced by—no offence—yourself, Bob, but with a considerable margin of pleasure in addition as recompense for what would be to us uncongenial and prosaic, not to say dirty work, you would, I think, find us rivals quite the reverse of despicable both at 'change and market. You know how the Greek tradespeople suffered, notwithstanding their well-established adulterations, when the philosopher of old set up *his* shop, to prove that he could be a man of business."

"Oh, confound it," said I, for I am none of your argufiers, "if metaphysics is your game, I'm off; only just answer me this: was there ever a poet yet who kept his own accounts, and left off in the world a better man—I mean, of course, a richer—than he began?"

"The majority of them," answered he, lighting a pipe, "have most certainly done so; a number of them, you will allow it, have even shown a common sense above the common, in living all their lives at other people's expense;—many of them have been remarkable for their business habits. William Wordsworth, for instance, and Robert Southey, who both lived within ten miles of this cottage door—while Mr. Samuel Rogers was a banker: think of that, Bob! Shakespeare, I believe, had much more common sense than Baron Rothschild."

"Come, John," cried I, with a burst of laughter, "perhaps, after *that*, you'll have the kindness to tell what common sense is?" And this was his reply.

"Common sense, Bob, is the sense, as its name implies, which is common to everybody, and its office in us, according to general opinion, is to watch over and provide for our own interests and happiness. Men of striking intellect, of all sorts, possess, I believe, this quality in greater proportion than ordinary people; these latter, however, being by far the most numerous, agreeing among themselves upon what are the objects to be desired in life, and perceiving the others to be striving after and delighting in quite different things, are inclined to deny them common sense; thereby making themselves judges of the interests and happiness of natures

confessedly higher. Moreover, the vulgar, having thus flattered themselves that this quality is peculiarly their own and possessing for the most part little other sense besides, are wont to exalt common sense to a most ridiculous degree."

"Oh," said I, "since you choose to get rude and personal"—which is a thing I particularly object to in all argument—"I shall certainly not prolong the conversation."





AN EXCEEDINGLY CHEAP TOUR.

ALTHOUGH I am tolerably well off, for a curate, in having nothing to pay for vegetables and house-rent, money—as far as it can be said of any churchman—is a considerable object to me. I have to save in this matter, and to go without in that, and to accustom my stomach a good deal to home-made wine. My surplice—the idea of a curate having such a thing!—is not of lawn, nor do I renew very often that miraculous silk garment without fastening, the getting into which is one of the mysteries of the Church of England. I read the wicked *Times*, on its third day, without feeling any of those disagreeable qualms with which it affects my reverend rector, “the cloth” it sometimes attacks being of a material widely different from mine. I confess, however, that my own clerical character falls considerably short of the ideal standard set up by the conductors of that journal. I think it no sin in a bachelor curate, whose hard lines have fallen in a place five miles from the nearest educated being, to feel a little dull, to be desirous of a visit from an old friend from time to time, or to take his parson’s holiday, of twenty days, once every summer. I take one myself yearly, with as much

mental profit as pleasure, and return to my parish all the better fitted in health and spirit to renew my labours in that vineyard. In the front of a certain June, I walked over the English and Scotch late districts with Tom Trevor, attorney-at-law, of Striketown. We were at dear old Trinity together in the old times, and understood one another perfectly. "We have heard the chimes at midnight, have we not?" quotes he. "Oh, the mad days we have spent, and to see how many of mine old acquaintance that are now clergymen!" I have no antecedents, I am thankful to say, to be very deeply ashamed of; and if I had, I should know that Tom could mean nothing but good-humour and pleasantry in reminding me of them. He is one of those rare ones who can say without offence anything, that from another man would be absolutely intolerable. That perpetual pyrotechnic display of his, no matter how inflammable the material on which it descends, never seems to set any one on fire. I don't know where he keeps his law-books, his business airs, his ill-successes, his Christmas bills, and his indigestions, but none of his friends have ever seen a symptom of them: this of course weakens the vulgar belief in his solid virtues; and we who are pillars shake our heads a little, though we cannot refuse to offer cordial hands; while his defence is, that his principles, so far from not being high enough, are elevated clean out of sight.

"He gives his brothers of his best;
His worst he keeps, his best he gives,"

and I for one am not inclined to be hard upon him. He is, of course, one of the most charming "tourist's companions" possible, and full of the happiest illustrations, lending an interest to the dullest landscapes, and heightening the glory of the grandest,—"Unto sorrow giving smiles, and unto graces, graces." I remember him, while at college, discovering a pathos in a certain proposition in statics—whose object and meaning I have entirely forgotten, and which I shall

most probably misquote—and throwing a touching regretfulness into his tones as he described how “D E vanisheth, the weight is supported by the immovable fulcrum C, and the body is at rest !” It is said to have drawn tears from an entire lecture-room.

“Now, Trevor,” said I, before we started upon our rambles, “you have a genius for finance, I know, so you shall carry the bag for both of us ; but remember I am but a poor curate, so don’t be over-generous.”

“Reverend Sir,” answered he, “I am a lawyer, and such imputations I shake off me as dew-drops are shaken from the calf-skin. Leave everything pecuniary to me.”

After this arrangement, I, of course, never interfered in such matters, nor was I ever present at any settling transactions whatsoever ; and hence it was, as will be seen, that I came to make such an exceedingly cheap tour.

The landscape which lies round my curacy has none of those monstrous objects about it, obstructing the light and air, which are called trees ; but their place is supplied in some measure by gigantic chimneys, from the mouths of which rises an artificial sky, so dense that one wonders it doesn’t rain down ink. And yet we have a sense of coming summer even there—a rustle of the leafy woodlands, a murmur of the pleasant brooks, make themselves heard amidst our very furnace-roars ; we feel that somewhere is the sun unblurred, the snow-white cloud set in the stainless blue ; the green earth without touch of cinder-scar. We that have heard it, long then to hear the wind at its wild play among the hill-tops, as hungry men for food. The great town, whose iron clamour comes to us for ever across the level flats, in summer scarcely seems fit to breathe and move in. There are no fountains there, no parks, no gardens, no galleries of pictures, where a man may slake his thirst for freshness and for freedom ; the workman there knows not so much of Nature even as Art, her pretty waiting-maid, can tell him ; that is what dulls our pleasure—Tom’s and mine—as we start from the hot clanging Striketown Station for the

purple hills. "The pastor sees the dewy meadows, and the water-springs, but the flock never sees," sighed I. "Yes," echoed Trevor; "you the pastor, I the shearer, we alone." A Striketown magnate in the same carriage—he was a corrugated-iron merchant, and he looked like it—took umbrage at our remarks upon this subject; but myself engaging him steadily hand to hand, while Tom dazzled him with his finest sheet-lightning, we reduced him to silence; presently, however, while we two were speaking of the best poetical expressions for distance, and one was instancing poor Keats's

"There she stood,
About a young bird's flutter from the wood,"

he broke in again with,—"And, gentlemen, pray how many yards may that be?" and so revenged himself.

Stafford, Preston, Lancaster, the abominable Crewe, were all left behind in due course, and we quitted the London and North-Western for Westmoreland and fairyland at last. I confess myself to have been born a Cockney, and to entertain an admiration, not unmixed with awe, for the Surrey range. The great mountain mesh-work of the lake country is to my eyes, therefore, quite as tremendous as the Himalayas; and all the witty things that have been said against it and the Lakes pass by me like the idle wind, that wakes a smile of pity upon the face of fair Windermere, but never stirs its depths. I know not how far the dim recollection of a wearisome journey and the distinct remembrance of a most excellent dinner, may have contributed to bring it about, but as we lay in our boat beneath Belle Isle that evening, the careless splash of the oars alone breaking the silence which brooded over the serene hills and moonlit lake, I believe, with Trevor, that if you had put pen and ink within my grasp—and it were not for the rhymes—I could have gone nigh to have written a sonnet. I feel at this moment the fatal facility of the lake district for writing descriptions stealing over me at the mere reminiscence; I long to honey my page with

such names as Ambleside and Elterwater, or to make it like a leaf out of some mountain peerage, with such titles as Helvellyn and Glaramara, but I forbear. Enough to say, that we made forced marches over the hills and far away to our great content ; the knapsacks—which at first seemed to be endowed with life and a desire to go the other way—which lay between our astonished shoulders like two large live coals, and which rendered our conditions of equilibrium both novel and dangerous—at last becoming as natural to us as the hump to the camel. And ever, at the close of each day's toil, did the red wine flow from the hotel's best bin ; nor at any time, when our four legs grew weary, did we hesitate to hire eight fresh ones to relieve them, till for my part, I began to fear that we should scarcely reach the Land of Cakes at all, or if we did, that we should have no money left to buy any. That Tom did pay for things, and pay liberally, was evident enough, for I never saw landlords more obsequious, landladies more gracious, or the plurality of boots more perfectly satisfied. One day, when we were carrying it, the driver, who was new to the lake-country, and desired to make a cicerone of himself for the benefit of future visitors, entreated us to point out to him the local habitations and the names of the great celebrities, which Trevor did at once, most cheerfully and with a vengeance. It seemed to our astonished Jehu that so many eminent persons were never before collected in so small a compass ; in particular, a certain sequestered clergyman, preferring the delights of solitude among the hills to that of his collegiate halls during the long vacation, had an undreamt-of greatness thrust upon him. Many a time has he since been startled by a string of cars, filled with excursionists, pulling short up before his cottage door, while our apt friend, whip in hand, dilates aloud upon the glory of " Mr. A——, the Fellow of St. Boniface, the accomplished coach, who knows more about the Grecian tongue than any other man within the four seas ; that's his bed-room, gentlemen and ladies, looking east." For all which incense he is indebted to Tom Trevor. On

account of this good turn being done him, the driver declined to take more than a shilling for charioteering us twelve miles ; but of course Tom couldn't get rid of all our carmen for such a mere *song* as that ; and how the purse held out, grew a still greater wonder to me, day by day.

In Caledonia, matters went on just as smoothly : we denied ourselves no dainty which loch or mountain afforded, while the wine of the country, by reason of its smoky character, was pronounced not good enough for our palates, and rejected for burgundy and claret. Still, while I was set wondering whether or not a clergyman of the Church of England could be imprisoned in a Tolbooth for a hotel-bill, the adulation of us in no way decreased. Gillies ran bare-legged, as though with the fiery cross in hand, to do our behests ; musicians, with instruments resembling the interiors of quadrupeds, performed the most excruciating coronachs at our departures and what were meant for agreeable airs at our arrivals. The best bed-rooms seemed to have been bespoken for us at every inn, and the seats that were most comfortable, or which commanded the most extensive views, to have been reserved for us in the coffee-rooms. I began to have a horrid suspicion that we were being taken for somebody else—ambassadors extraordinary, or the Brothers Rothschild in disguise. Trevor had some sketching-paper, and I a note-book, which I used pretty freely ; but neither authors nor artists—I can answer for Striketown, at least—were wont to be held in such consideration in the south, as to induce a belief that our genius and talents were only receiving their natural tributes. Sometimes Tom wrote the day before to secure accommodation for us, and sometimes had an interview with the landlord as soon as we arrived ; but in either case, our occupation of the premises seemed to be hailed as triumphant and honourable to an extreme degree.

At one of the largest inns in the Western Highlands, I happened, in Trevor's absence, to receive the bill instead of him, and I remember thinking of sending it to the *Times*

newspaper, to refute the calumnies that had been published about hotel-charges, only Tom persuaded me not. This is the bill, which, for two persons, I surely was justified in thinking very moderate :—

	s.	d.
"Double-bedded room	1	6
Soup and fish-dinner (for two)	3	0
Bottle of port (1834)	3	0
Breakfast for two, with meat	1	6
Total	9	0

N.B.—It is particularly requested that no gratuities may be given to the servants."

I was much astonished that none of our fellow-travellers by the coach that morning seemed to be satisfied with their bills, but accused the landlord most unmercifully of extortion and excess ; and I agreed with Tom that it was a very remarkable exemplification of the proverbial nearness of the Scotch character.

We travelled so fast, that I had time enough to spare for a four days' run into Ireland, which I was over-persuaded to take by my companion.

The sister-isle received us with extended arms ; if anything the welcomes of the innkeepers appeared to be still warmer and more affectionate than elsewhere, and the settlement of their accounts a mere form, that we were at liberty to go through or not, as we preferred. The landladies went so far, on more than one occasion, as to kiss Trevor, and to entitle me their jewel ; the gossoons stood on their heads to do us honour ; and the very beggars about the innyards, regarded us with a solicitude that was the more remarkable by reason of the difference of our countries and religions.

Upon the nineteenth day, I returned like a punctual shepherd to my flock, and on our road, Tom Trevor, Esq., attorney-at-law, insisted upon my auditing the accounts of our

expenses, which — particularly as he handed me a much larger balance than, under the circumstances, I should have thought possible—I was very unwilling to do. My share of the three weeks' tour, irrespective of coach, railway, and packet fares, was under a five-pound note.

"Well, my dear fellow," said I, with that feeling of grateful admiration which a Briton rarely permits himself to entertain except towards a great financier, "all I can say is, I can't imagine how you did it. I never lived better or at less cost in all my life, and I shall certainly go over the same ground next summer, and, as I most sincerely hope, with the same companion."

There was a curious expression about Trevor's eye which made me unaccountably uneasy, as he replied with some dryness: "Well, I think your reverence had better not do that for a few seasons."

"Why, why not, Trevor?—for goodness' sake, tell me why not?" said I, getting alarmed.

"Oh, nothing; don't be afraid, my dear Sir; trust me for keeping on the safe side of the law in these matters."

"The law!" gasped I, looking at the figures just transferred to my note-book, and regretting, somehow, that they did not make up a larger sum. "Why, you don't mean to say you——"

"No, I did nothing," interrupted Tom; "it was all you, you and that note-book. The fact is, you made such copious remarks in it from the first hour we started, and at every place you came to, that I thought you were compiling a *Guide to the North*, and without asking you the question point-blank, which I considered would have been indelicate, I communicated my suspicions, sometimes in writing, sometimes verbally, to the innkeepers. 'My friend,' I said to them, 'is desirous of every information about this spot, and particularly regarding your hotel-charges: you must not speak to him as if you were aware of this, for he is pledged by the Messrs. Gratesail, publishers, to secrecy and independence; but I am pleased with your

house myself, and am willing, under the rose, to do you a good turn.' Every time you put pen to paper in the coffee-room saved us half-a-crown apiece at least ; there was quite a difficulty in some places in getting them to charge us anything at all ; and I must say that, all along, you acted your part to perfection."

"Acted my part ! how dare you," said I, in a towering passion, "you base, horrid——"

"There now, you are going on to what is actionable," interrupted Tom. "You parsons never know when to stop, and you are, besides, the last people in the world to take a healthy and charitable view of things. This is how the matter stands : we have passed, by your own confession, a very sumptuous three weeks ; we have given opportunities to a much maligned class of our fellow-countrymen to exhibit their reasonableness and civility ; we have threatened to inflict upon society a new guide-book, which you have both the power and the will to withhold : and, finally, we have had, I must say, an exceedingly cheap tour."





THE GENTLE READER.

HAVING written a good deal for the general public without receiving any acknowledgment from that particular member of it, the gentle reader, I, for one, am not going to flatter him any longer. It is my private belief that he never purchased a book in his life. I doubt whether he ever even went so far as to subscribe to a library. I believe him to be a sort of person who borrows volumes from the book-shelves of his friends, and writes in pencil his idiotic remarks upon the margins of them. It is exceedingly improbable, if he does buy books, that he ever bought any of mine, because in plain truth, the gentle reader is unavoidably a fool. Otherwise, would authors, who are conscious of having been insufferably stupid and prosy, or of being about to become so in their next chapter, so unanimously appeal to his goodnature and foolish forbearance? They take such liberties with him, and place him in such positions as would be resented by any person of proper sense and feeling. When a love-scene is about to be described at any intolerable length, the gentle reader is commonly lugged in as a third party, and made a confidant of whether he will or no, by the two silly young folks.

It is, first of all, fawningly insinuated that he, the gentle reader, knows all about it, being, as he is, so fascinating an individual, and having been the object of adoration of so many hearts; and then the whole tedious matter is laid before him in all its turtle-dove monotony, while the melancholy details are dwelt upon with a sentimental distinctness, to which impropriety itself would be almost preferable.

In descriptions of scenery especially, this patron of the novelists has to go through a very great deal for their sweet sakes; he has to accompany them, if he will be so good, to inaccessible heights, where the foot of man has never before trodden, and where the shriek of the goshawk, or other bird unknown except to ornithologists, alone is heard; or he has to wander among hanging woodlands, hand in hand with the writer, until he is deposited upon a dampish bank, by the side of a stream, whose course is presently compared, at prodigious length, to the life of man. When the novelist, indeed, is inclined to moralise, the gentle reader is apostrophised as though he were Lord Bacon, or Dr. Paley, and made accessory to the most uninteresting and illogical sentiments of the author's, respecting being and human responsibility.

If religion be the subject of the work, the gentle reader is made a party to the strangest "views," and that by no means in the pleasantest manner; his opinions being taken to be identical with those of the writer, not as a matter of course, but as one about which, on the contrary, there existed no little suspicion: he is regarded with an eye not so much of respect as of a certain affectionate watchfulness, and his supposed scruples are combated with a sort of tender authority, as though the author were his father-in-law and an archbishop. In battle-scenes, again, and stirring incidents of that kind, this slave of literature is commonly carried to a slight acclivity, commanding not only a good general view of what is going forward, but—to judge by what he is made to see—a very particular one also; and I have even known the gentle reader, upon one occasion, to have

been shamefully inveigled into a tree, under promise of becoming spectator of a deadly combat, only to be compelled to listen to some heroic verses of the seducer, who, taking advantage of the poor fellow's stationary position, inflicted a good three dozen. Nobody but a very weak-minded person indeed would suffer himself to be treated in this manner more than once, whereas there is neither cessation nor limit to the persecution of the gentle reader. That he is put upon thus remorselessly, and attacked with this impunity,—that every scribbler hails him as his friend, and leads him through all the stupidest scenes by the button-hole,—is, no doubt, because of his gentleness. The gentle reader is unable to say No, or Bo to a goose-quill. No author dares to treat the reader—pure and simple—in any such way. On the contrary his connection with that gentleman is wholly of a business character, and no obligation is supposed to be upon either side. The courteous reader, even, is not so great a ninny as the subject of this paper, and is addressed, with hat in hand, indeed, but yet as a reasonably ill-tempered individual with whom absurd liberties are not to be taken. Our fair readers—who are always in the plural, and, I think, supposed to be the sharers of an eternal friendship which has lasted thirteen weeks at a boarding-school, and who lean over the same pages with arms round each other's necks and in mutual tears—are trifled with somewhat, and not set at a very high intellectual estimate ; but still they have not that catholicism of character which admits of their being so continuously ill-treated as the gentle reader. The dear reader is only apostrophised by female writers, who endeavour by that unjustifiable emollient to blind the judgment and enlist the affections on their side.

The general reader is at the head of a totally different class. He is, in the author's eyes, the ringleader of the unappreciating and illiterate mob ; of that faction—and it is sometimes considerable—which is sure to decline to read, and far more to buy, his book. When a chapter is about to be devoted to a subject which the writer has not entirely

mastered, or is about to be filled with got-up and unnecessary technical expressions, the general reader is warned off in the opening sentences, as by a trespass-board. He is recommended, in a foot-note, to buy another work of the author's, written in a more popular style, and not to read any more of that which he has in his hand, because he won't understand it. The intelligent reader and the like are, at the same time, flatteringly beckoned on, it is true ; but everybody knows pretty well what is coming, and skips the chapter. This notice to the general reader is the first open declaration of that contempt which the author secretly entertains for many even of his own clients. A sneering reference to the casual reader speedily follows. The casual reader will not peruse, and will not understand if he does peruse ; will not be entertained, and if he is entertained where no entertainment is meant, ought to be ashamed of himself ; will fail to mark, or, having marked, will not be able to carry it in his mind to the place where it will be useful to him ; will skim too hastily—in fact, the casual reader is periphrastically informed that he had better shut up the book, go home, and get to bed. Having thus lashed himself into fury, and the worst passions of his professional nature being fully aroused, the author throws aside the last rag of courtesy, and falls tooth-and-nail and steel-pen upon the vapid and irreflective reader himself. He has been waiting for him for some considerable time. The bonds of sympathy between the writer and the public have been long gradually loosening, and are now utterly dissolved. Scarcely anybody is ignorant that, under the name of the vapid and irreflective reader, the author is, in reality, anathematising everybody. Upon that unfortunate subject he avenges himself, with a hideous malice, for the servile adulation which he has lavished, in other places, upon the gentle reader, and others of that kidney. The slave, as generally happens, is now become the tyrant. Growing duller and duller in the matter of the work he is composing—and what is more, being well aware of it himself—he waxes fierce and more intolerant

against that increasing majority of the reading public who are unlikely to read him. The only person, indeed, who can be compared to the vapid and irreflective reader as a type of all that is base and foolish, is that equally denounced individual, the sinner, who is the target of the divines. In the latter case, by some fortunate arrangement of our ideas, we rarely associate the object of so much invective with ourselves ; but, in the former, we cannot fail to recognise some of our own familiar lineaments. Still, there is in this an honest outspokening and an acknowledged misunderstanding between the author and his unappreciators, which is to me infinitely preferable to that hypocritical deference he pays to the gentle reader. Any allusion to him—and, indeed, to *any* reader—only helps to destroy what little reality the writer may have had the good fortune to invest his scenes with, and to break that web of fancy which, Apollo knows, it is hard enough for him to weave. Moreover, as I have said—and this consideration has much weight with me—there is little or nothing to be got out of the gentle reader. The very mention of him, indeed, is a literary toadyism, from the practice of which, as of all other toadyisms, no true benefit can be ever possibly derived. Therefore, though my brethren of the pen may tremble at my audacity, and the unaccustomed public knit its indignant brows, I hereby declare that I do not care three halfpence whether this paper of mine shall please the gentle reader or not.



THE NEXT PRESENTATION.

LENGTH of days is said, upon the highest authority, to be one of man's chiefest blessings, and it is not the intention of this writer to contravene that authoritative statement. Still, what was an advantage to the patriarchs may not be equally convenient now-a-days ; and if a gentleman persists in holding property, in which he has only a life interest, as if he were possessed of the fee-simple and might enjoy it in perpetuity, he must be prepared to meet with indignation. "Live and let live" should be everybody's motto ; and excess in everything — even in vitality — is especially unbecoming in a divine. Nobody, beyond his own immediate relatives and friends, has, of course, a right to object to a curate's living on to any length of time. But if a man with a good benefice, like myself, enjoy the same beyond the reasonable hopes of the purchaser of the next presentation—beyond the limit, that is, which compilers of annuity tables have set down as his legitimate average—he cannot escape without a hint or two that he is standing in the way of other people.

I trust that what I have to say may serve as a warning to persons of sensitive nature who may be thinking of entering

the ministry of the Church of England, and of investing their money in her at the same time. If they do buy a living for themselves, let it be the advowson ; or if they be so rash as to secure a mere life interest in her (as I have done), let them be well convinced beforehand—would they avoid the inconveniences of which I have to tell—that they have not an immoderate share of vital stamina. They must by no means think that general debility will be any guarantee for this, for I have known a man to be put into a very excellent living merely as a stop-gap, and actually chosen on account of his many admirable infirmities, who yet retained his post for half a century, and outlived the grandson of the man who first waited for his shoes. The circumstances of this most unjustifiable event occurred within my own knowledge, and in the following manner.

The family living of the Yellowboys fell vacant while their second son, Euphranor (whom they had destined for that preferment), was still at college, and before he was legally qualified to take that responsible charge upon his shoulders. They therefore looked about them for a “warming-pan ;” that is to say, a gentleman in orders, who would be content to hold the place until the young man was of fit age, receiving the full stipend in the meantime in return for the obligation. But not only is there an ecclesiastical canon which forbids this very convenient and not uncommon arrangement—a fact which, I fear, would not of itself have deterred the head of the house of Yellowboys from adopting it,—but examples are on record of “warming-pans” who have refused to remove from comfortable quarters at the appointed time, protesting that the bed was *their own*, and that they meant to lie upon it. To obviate any risk of this kind, Yellowboys senior made a gift of the next presentation to a certain cousin of his, not so ancient, indeed, as was desirable, but afflicted with such a complication of disorders as promised, if there was any faith to be placed in doctors, to carry him off in two or three years at the very latest.

The Rev. Joseph Yellowboys, on receiving this good

tidings, pricked up his drooping ears, returned, with thanks, to his bishop, the "perpetual" curacy in the Fen country (where nobody lives any time to speak of, even if there is no inundation), and came up rejoicing (and, I think, on crutches) to the rectory of Butterson Magna. He read himself in in such a quavering voice, that Squire Yellowboys doubted whether the powers of his relative would even last out the very moderate span that was expected of them ; and his cough throughout that evening—for I was a child staying at the park with the young Yellowboys at the time, and came down to dessert, and met him—his cough, I say, would have been music to his heir, if he had happened to have had one, which *at that time* was not the case. He was lame with both legs ; he had only one eye, and even that had an involuntary rotatory movement like that of a dying firework ; he was thinner, and rather more dried-up looking than a red herring ; and he had several most serious maladies (as was affirmed on excellent authority), besides the more ordinary ailments—such as asthma and bronchitis—which were patent to all who set eyes upon him.

Yet, poor Euphranor Yellowboys waited for Butterson Magna for ten years, and then, instead of getting his living, died ; and Euphranor's son died, expectant, after him ; and now Euphranor's son's son (as I have just heard) is dead likewise, and the Rev. Joseph Yellowboys is rector still.

Again, in the case of Sheepington, the fattest living in the gift of St. Clement's, Oxford, what a shocking miscalculation there was *there !* The great tithes alone of that place, they tell me, are over three thousand a year. It has capital shooting in the very midst of his Grace of Muddleborough's preserves, who is therefore always on his best behaviour towards the incumbent ; and dissent is almost unknown in the parish. It is altogether much too good a thing to go by seniority, and therefore the struggle to secure Sheepington when it chances to fall vacant (which is somehow very seldom) is something unparalleled. It resembles, in one respect at least, the strife for good-service pensions given to deserving warriors. Each

candidate exhibits his wounds and his decrepitude as so much claim upon the sympathies of the electors. The applicants for Sheepington, however, do not pretend that they owe these to hard usage in the cause of the church militant ; they only say : " Behold our sad—our really hopeless condition, electors ! If you should but confer this boon upon us, the next presentation of it must needs fall to you within a very few years. Vote for Senex and Softening of the Brain ! Vote for Octogenarius and Paralysis ! "

Two eminent divines, neither of whom was destitute of good physical demerits, contended on the last occasion for this great clerical prize, and the votes, after the closest scrutiny, were declared equal. To elect one, would have been to mortally affront the other, and might have driven either (for the heart and liver were the parts affected in the two cases) into the grave at once ; so the council determined to procrastinate. They elected the vice-principal of the college, a gentleman of a fabulous age, who weighed seventeen stone, and had not seen his own knees for thirty years.

" Let us try again," said they, "*after a few months*, and then, perhaps, we shall have less difficulty in coming to a final decision."

The majority of these sanguine individuals are now lying in St. Clement hys Chapelle, with neat mural tablets over them, which celebrate their virtues in the Latin tongue. Both the eminent divines have departed from this sublunary sphere ; but the Rev. Methuselah Heviside still occupies the rectory of Sheepington, although he has been for many years unable to squeeze himself into its pulpit.

Now, in both these cases it has so happened that the long-lived rectors have been peculiarly fitted to bear with calmness the indignation which their conduct has excited. The Rev. Joseph Yellowboys (who married, by-the-bye, within six months of his promotion, and has now several grandchildren) is quite unconscious, or at least appears to be so, of the disapproval of his relatives with respect to his absurd longevity. He openly expresses his belief that a man has a

right to live as long as he can, without any regard to the pecuniary interests of others ; and when he is reminded that there is moderation in all things, and that enough is as good as a feast, he begins to argue in a vicious circle. He says we must come round to the starting-point, and define what moderation really is, which changes (he contends) according to each man's circumstances : he was once, he confesses, wont to consider eighty as a tolerable age, which he now looks back upon as the prime of life ; while that which he might reasonably have considered to be a feast while he was a curate in the Fens, he would hold to be a very indifferent dinner indeed at Butters-ton Magna.

As for the Rev. Methuselah Heviside—"our Met," as we call him in the Clerical Club—whenever the wrong he has been guilty of towards his college is mentioned, he laughs to that degree that I look to see it avenged upon the spot. He rolls like the *Great Eastern* in a sea, he coughs, he turns purple and black, and when his terrified wife (the *third* since his appointment to Sheepington) does at last recover him by a method analogous to that recommended by Marshall Hall in the case of persons apparently drowned, he wheezes out : "I *know* they're vexed, but I mean to keep it for half a century yet." Which he most certainly will—if he can.

But neither of these two gentlemen, as may well be imagined, are of that sensitive and chivalrous nature which is doubtless yours, my young friends—as it is also mine, alas ! My own simple, but truly touching story, reader, runs—if I can call that running which loiters so inexcusably — as follows :—

It is many years ago—I confess it—since I bought my life-interest in the living which I still hold ; but, on the other hand, I had myself a considerable time to wait.

TO BE SOLD, the NEXT PRESENTATION to the Living of Chauncey Bassett ; tithe so much ; glebe so big ; rectory house in good repair ; locality salubrious and picturesque. Age of present incumbent, 76.

Such was the advertisement which met my eyes nearly

half a century ago ; dazzling enough to a young divine like myself, who had a few thousand pounds in the Three per Cents., the interest whereof, even with a curate's salary added, by no means made an income to marry upon—which seemed to me in those days the only legitimate object of all incomes.

My intended, Angelina, was, I felt confident, most admirably adapted for a clergyman's wife ; but then she had certain tastes in the pony carriage and *moiré antique* directions which pointed out that her husband should be a beneficed clergyman.

So I went to my guardian, and asked his opinion as to the purchase. This gentleman resided in Gray's Inn, where I used to think he must also have been born, with a wig on—must have sprung forth from the head of old Father Antic the Law armed *cap-à-pied*—so legal he was, so precise, so parchmenty, and with such very mercenary views regarding the most solemn subjects.

"In these speculative investments in church-property, young gentleman——" he began.

"My dear Sir," interrupted I, blushing, "I have not contemplated this affair, I hope, entirely from that point of view."

"In these excessively speculative investments," continued he, speaking *through* me (as though I was not a substantial form at all) to *Briggs on Conveyancing*, who stood on the opposite bookshelf—"investments in which *two* lives are concerned, and the calculations are proportionally complicated, we cannot be too cautious. The circumstance of the incumbent being seventy-six will doubtless render the patron anxious to come to terms, insomuch as if he was so unfortunate as to die before the transfer was completed, he would actually have *to give the living away* ! On the other hand, incumbents of seventy-six are often comparatively young people ; and you perceive that the advertisement admits—it is most incautiously worded, and so far affords hope of an easy bargain—it admits that the situation is salubrious.

However, I will make every enquiry, and you may come to me in a fortnight for my best advice."

At the appointed time I revisited my astute guardian—whom it would be impertinent, because totally inadequate, to compare, in respect to his detective qualities, with a ferret—and found him in possession of all the facts connected with my contemplated purchase. The actual patron of Chauncey Bassett was a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion, whose father had had pecuniary transactions with the grandfather of the present squire of the parish, from which the Gentile had escaped with his estate, but had left the advowson of the living in the hands of the Hebrew. It seemed very odd, and indeed wrong, to me at that period, that a Jew should have a Christian living, even indirectly, in his gift; but my guardian bade me take comfort, on the ground that I myself, at least, would be under no obligation to him, but would have to buy it with hard cash.

"My only fear," added he with an air of reflection, "is lest Mr. Levi and the parson may be confederated in the business, and that the latter is in reality a younger man in stamina than he chooses to seem. His appearance (though I saw him on a Monday, just after his chief day's work, to be sure) is most promising; feeble, fragile, and with a certain quavering of the voice, from which one would argue the best, if one was certain that all was on the square. But if the patron should have made it worth the incumbent's while to look his very worst, in order that the bidding may rise—why, then—you see, young gentleman, what a *very* speculative investment this sort of church property is!"

"But, my dear Sir," ejaculated I, aghast and shuddering, "is it probable——"

"Nay, Sir," returned the lawyer with irritation, "I have nothing to do with that. It is certainly *possible*: and it is with possibilities that I, as your guardian, have to do."

Eventually the next presentation became mine, or rather my guardian's, who, to humour a certain prejudice of the law against the convenience called Simony, affected to buy it

himself and then handed it over to me ; and after an interval of ten years, during which I hope I never wished the situation of Chauncey Bassett less salubrious by one breath of summer air, the incumbent became at length *recumbent*, and I was installed rector in his stead.

Since that welcome period, up to a very recent date, Angelina, and afterwards Caroline and myself, have lived a life of almost unruffled calm. Children were born unto us every year—as is almost the universal custom among the clergy—and none, thank Heaven, were taken from us. I have held in my arms at the baptismal-font well-nigh half the parish, and there is not a man, woman, or child within it with whom I am not acquainted. The squire—he that was “the young squire” when I first arrived—is ailing, which at his years he cannot but expect to be, but nobly seconds with his purse any proposition of mine for the benefit of the poor. The vestry, although not exactly liberal, I have always found to be pliant if manipulated with tact and good humour. The meeting-house at Ranter’s End has been happily out of repair for some time, and the funds, I am told, are not forthcoming, even to set the roof in order. Our new bishop—the fourth, by-the-bye, that has had the diocese in my time—is courteous, and thoughtful for others ; he complimented Angelina upon her apricot jam at luncheon after our last confirmation in a manner she will never forget. Until within the last few months, in short, I was the happy rector of a model parish, with as few causes of annoyance as can be reasonably expected in a country where church-rates have been but recently saved from abolition only by a majority of one. Too great content, it was held by the ancients, provokes the anger of the gods ; and perhaps I was too comfortable. My worst enemy, however, can certainly no longer lay this to my charge. The thin end of the wedge—to use a metaphor which has been made their own by the great Conservative party of my native land—was inserted in the heart of my domestic life in April last, and the mallet has been falling, and the breach widening ever since.

The first blow was struck in this manner : I was engaged

in the peaceful occupation of gardening, a little before luncheon time, when there drove up to the door a fly and pair from the railway station, bringing a strange gentleman of about my own age, and apparently of the legal profession. I hurried in to pay those pious duties of hospitality which in the country have not as yet fallen into disuse, and learned from my visitor that his name was Filer, and that he had the misfortune to be an attorney. Some men might have been dissatisfied with this information, and have asked him what was his business at Chauncey Bassett; but, as the bell was just then ringing for the children's dinner, I only asked him in to lunch. The number of my offspring seemed to astonish him, and he took in them an evident interest, which could not but be pleasing to Caroline—for Angelina, poor dear, was taken from me many years back.

"This is your youngest, I conclude, Sir," observed he, taking Adolphus John's left ear between his fingers, who, considering himself to be a young man, and aspiring to "stick-ups," resented that familiarity with some dignity.

"Yes," said I, rather tartly, "it is;" for why he should have taken upon himself to *conclude* anything of the sort, I was at a loss to understand.

"Thank you; I will have another help," responded the old gentleman presently, to an invitation of my wife, who was superintending the cold beef: "the air of your down-country is truly appetising. What health your husband seems to enjoy, Madam! He looks as robust as men in London who are only half his age."

"Thank you, Sir," responded the hostess; "he is very well."

"He is very *gray*, however," remarked the visitor with startling abruptness.

"At *our* age," retorted my wife, with some asperity, "we must be fortunate indeed not to be gray."

"True, Madam—true. If I were not perfectly bald, as you perceive, I should doubtless be gray myself. You are looking for the salt, reverend Sir; permit me. I dare say, now, you find your sight begin to fail you a little?"

"Well," said I, good humouredly, "I do wear spectacles now and then, I confess."

"You *do* wear spectacles now and then, do you? Ah! Now, do you wear *strong* spectacles?"

I began to think this man must be a person of extraordinary benevolence, notwithstanding his acknowledged profession, and I therefore detailed to him certain difficulties which I had lately met with in getting my sight suited.

"Dear me," said he, after listening to me with an appearance of the greatest interest; "your lungs and hearing are, however, I remark, in the most excellent order. May I ask—you seemed to have a little difficulty with that crust just now—may I ask how you are off for teeth?"

I was about to explain, for I don't see why one should make a secret of such matters, how much more comfortable I felt with those that Mr. Wrencham procured for me last autumn, when I perceived my wife to be telegraphing to me, as plain as eyes could speak, to take the man away, because there was only pudding enough for the children: so I asked him to have a stroll with me in the garden. "There, at least," said I to myself, "he will disclose his business, and leave off asking questions about my bodily health." I opened the glass door that leads from my study on to our little lawn, and motioned that he should pass out first.

"Thank you," returned he; "I should much prefer your leading the way. How well you walk—how exceedingly well you walk!—you put your feet down with all the decision and firmness of a young man. I think, however, I detect a slight relaxation in the muscles of the left leg. They must of course be shrinking——"

"Sir," said I, turning sharply round upon him, as he stood making some memorandum in his note-book, "what business is it of yours, confound you, whether my muscles are shrinking or not?"

"My dear Sir," returned the lawyer, laying his finger upon my shoulder soothingly, "it is no business of *mine* whatever. I am employed by a young fellow who has just taken orders, and has confidence in my judgment. He sent me down on

purpose to look at you ; and you look a great deal too well, my dear Sir, a vast deal too well, for my client, I do assure you. Mr. Levi is putting far too high a price upon the concern, according to present appearances. You bought, you know, the next presentation of this living of his grandfather, yourself."

"So I did," said I with an involuntary sigh—"years and years ago : I remember the very day I did so as though it was yesterday."

"The dickens you do !" ejaculated Mr. Filer with irritation. "Why, your memory must be as good as ever, then ! That is a great point against Levi's offer, that is. Don't you ever find your head swim ?"

"It is advertised in the papers, I suppose," said I, without replying to the question, for I was looking sadly round upon the dear old place, which seemed as though it was about to pass out of my hands at once.

"Yes," returned he, "of course it's advertised, and I must say that it's very well done. It leads one to expect better things—I am looking at it from a professional point of view, you will understand—it hints that almost immediate occupation may be looked for. There will be scores of people coming down here upon a fool's errand. I left a fellow at the railway station even now, who will arrive with the same object as myself this very afternoon. He wanted to share my fly with me, but I knew better than that. He might have telegraphed 'Buy' to his man in the city, and taken the wind out of my sails at once. However, he may telegraph what he likes now. I was particularly told to see your chancel—for my young friend is High Church—but since I have seen *you*, Sir, that is more than enough. I thank you, however, for your hospitality. Excuse what may have looked like rudeness in my conduct to your good lady : business is business, and must be attended to before all things—that's my motto. I wish you good-day, Sir, and a long life. Here is the gentleman I spoke of coming down the lane. Observe how he is turning up the soil with his umbrella, to see what sort of a glebe you have !"

Mr. Filer, attorney-at-law, spoke truly. Scores of people have come, and are still coming down to Chauncey Bassett, if not on a fool's errand, at least on an errand which does not seem to give them much satisfaction. Through no fault of my own, I feel that I am incurring the resentment of a great many worthy persons. A gentleman of seventy-two is expected to look a great deal less hearty and florid than the unfortunate strength of my constitution will permit me to do. One gentleman even hinted at being reimbursed in his travelling expenses, on the ground of having been enticed to this secluded spot upon false pretences. On the other hand, if I was to de cease suddenly, and before the transaction was concluded with any of the parties, Mr. Levi would be reduced to the desperate necessity of *giving away* (by proxy) the next presentation, since it would be illegal, under such circumstances, to sell it. Conceive the anxiety of my Hebrew friend in that emergency to discover the very oldest divine in the Church of England that could be got to hold it ; and how miserable would the last days of that venerable man be rendered by people coming to look at *him* !

The reflection that the older I grow the more tempting will be Mr. Levi's advertisement, and consequently the more numerous my enquiring friends, is by no means a soothing one. I wish from my heart that he was of a less grasping disposition, or else that one of the candidates for my to-be-vacant pulpit would bid a little higher, so that this matter might be settled. I should not mind *one* man taking an antagonistic interest in the state of my health ; but, as it is, I feel as though I were the common enemy of the human race—both male and female. It is not uncommon for ladies to accompany their husbands "to see how they like the look of the place," and these always ask to be shown over the up stair rooms, with an eye to improvements and alterations, when your humble servant, the present writer, shall have been taken out of his own bed-chamber feet foremost. One "engaged" young man confessed to me, with a charming frankness, that my drawing-room was just the sort of apartment in which he should like to see his *fiancée*—his Angelina—in-

stalled ; “but then,” added he, with a reproachful look at the calves of my legs, “there is no knowing when one is to get it.”

I really begin to think that some mutual arrangement with Mr. Levi (such as I was so ready to reprobate in my younger days) would not be altogether unjustifiable. If I chose to sit for half a day with my head tied up, and my legs in flannel, for instance—as I suppose I have a perfect right to do—these people would bite at once at Chauncey Bassett, I know. As it is, I am obliged to procure alleviation for myself by a pious fraud. On one occasion, an applicant called while I was exercising the colt ; and the servant who answered the front-door bell, informed the gentleman her master was engaged.

“Exercising the colt !” cried he ; “then I have been most grossly imposed upon. Coachman, drive me back to the station.”

Since then, I am afraid that “exercising the colt” has been rather a stereotyped reply at the door of the rectory of Chauncey Bassett, when any stranger comes to it and asks to look at the house, and whether the present writer is at home.





BOWLS AND BOWLING GREENS.

HOW meagre and unsatisfying to the human soul is the food offered to it by encyclopædias ! They may set at rest a doubt of the intellect ; they may satisfy the desires of the pocket by settling a disputed bet ; but beyond the bare mechanical statement of a fact, how rarely do they stray ! I look for my favourite game of bowls in one of them, and I find the Rev. William Lisle Bowles, author of several ingenious poems, in its place. I consult one of the best of them, and am humiliated to behold this charming subject dismissed in three-and-forty lines. In a third I read this idiotic (if not intentionally insulting) statement : “Bowls, an English game, *played with bowls* ; these are generally made of *lignum vite*.” I wonder out of what material the gentleman’s head was constructed who imparted that interesting information : if it had been elderwood, he could scarcely have been more pithy. Of bowling greens, whereon he might surely have whiled away a pleasant five minutes, the man says absolutely nothing.

A bowling green is nature’s billiard-table, and the game at bowls, compared to that pernicious pastime, is as gaslight unto sunlight, or as the sparkling water of the mountain-stream to that which is kept in tanks, and filtered by some patent process. The man that could object to bowls as a carnal amusement, must be a Puritan indeed, and ought to be made to swallow the Jack. It is so simple, that a child may learn its rules in a few minutes, and yet it requires such skill, that one may live to threescore-and-ten, and never understand one’s own bowls—an aphorism, although we say it who should not say it, which may take rank with many of Solomon’s. That sagacious monarch, it is more than probable, did not play bowls ; and the more was the pity, since it

is just such qualities as he is represented to have possessed which constitute a good player. Your intention, it is true, is simply to approach and lie by the Jack as nearly as possible ; but the means to be taken for the insurance of that result require a judgment of the highest order. A number of players have been before you (suppose), and placed their missiles like a *chevaux de frise* all around the desired object. To the unpractised eye, there is absolutely no ingress — no “port,” as it is called—for anything bigger than a marble. It is true that the half of those bowls belong to your own side ; but the unpractised eye does not conceal from itself—if it is an honest eye, and not inclined to blink matters—that that circumstance rather makes matters worse ; for it *is* worse to knock away a friend who is “in,” or to knock in an enemy who is “out,” than not to get in with one’s own bowl.

I have known a very tolerable player, nay, even a “skip” or captain of the side, to alter an existing score in this manner. His friends, who, let us suppose, are represented by *a*, have five bowls “in,” or nearest the Jack ; his enemies—the *b*’s—of course being “nowhere ;” and *x*—for the unhappy man is alive, and shall remain unknown—has to play the last bowl. That it is a dangerous bowl, there is no doubt. His allies, from the other end of the green, give warning-voice that they are willing to take what they have got, and be thankful ; that he had better not attempt another shot. His foes, pretending to be his friends, invite him, on the contrary, to “put in another.” They bring their Grecian gifts of advice gratis to an only too eager market. The wretched *x* entertains an idea—“a conception,” as he calls it—of vast but obscure character. This gentleman is ordinarily a most trustworthy “skip ;” but when he proclaims, as he sometimes does, that a splendid thought has struck him—the odds against the execution of which are always about 99 to 1—the knees of all his side are loosened with dismay. A mistake in prose-writing is excusable enough—*humanum est errare*,—but in poetry, in the divine art, a false rhythm, a discord, a bathos, and, far worse, the writing the exact opposite of that which you had intended to write, is not to be forgiven. *X* delivered

his bowl with even more than his usual consideration, and watched it for some moments with his arms calmly folded after the manner of the late Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte ; but at length perceiving what was about to happen, he fled up the grassy bank that fringed the green, and was seen no more amongst us for the remainder of the season. *X* had put "in" a bowl of the *b* party—put it in first, good reader ; had altered the score that was standing +5 in his own favour to — 1.

If such misfortunes, then, may happen to the best regulated "skips," you may conceive the dangers that beset a novice. His value as a player is, indeed, represented mathematically by the $\sqrt{-1}$; he is just as likely to do harm to his friends as to do good. He is thrown in at the end, when the rest of his side has been chosen, like the piece of suet which is cast into the butcher's scale to make up the weight. The present writer (whose personal characteristic is modesty) is indebted for some of his best lessons of humility to the discipline of the bowling green. As there were philosophers of the Porch, so, doubtless, there would have been of the green—had the ancients cultivated greens ; and, indeed, it is the belief of the more enthusiastic bowlers, that the philosopher Bias invented the pastime, and gave his illustrious name to the means whereby the missiles are impelled to the left or right. Some persons, on the other hand, imagine this to be derived from the bias, or disposition of the mind *to go to one side*—namely, one's own side ; to consider one's own bowl "in," when to every disinterested eye it is certainly *not* in ; but this we must leave to the etymologist. Certainly it is that, in bowls, the wish is not only father to the thought, but to the assertion ; and the amount of contradictory evidence which I have heard delivered around a Jack concerning the proximity of this or that, would not disgrace the court of the Old Bailey. I have even known a case where a gentleman of exceeding, and indeed somewhat exceptional reputation, incurred great unpopularity in a certain bowling club by introducing a spring measure which could not be tampered with, but always gave an accurate result. Before the in-

duction of that measure, the club had been used to estimate their distances by their respective pocket-handkerchiefs, which being of a more or less elastic texture, had given various results, suited to every mind ; and they resented the intrusion of the spring measure as the imposition of a tyrannical Act of Uniformity.

Again — to return to the difficulties of this science — the bowl-player has to guard not only against existing dangers ; he has to calculate also upon those which are likely to happen after he has played. If the bowls of his own side are “ in,” he has to protect them, so that the next player may do them no evil ; he has to stifle in his breast the desire of self-display—a most healthful discipline, which it is difficult indeed for some to submit themselves to—and to lie modestly (not nearing the desired object at all) a guardship in the offing, a “ block ” against which the coming foe may dash himself in impotent rage. As this is one of the severest acts of self-denial and self-devotion of which the human soul is capable, so it is, physically, exceedingly difficult to compass. It is all very well for a “ skip ” to exclaim “ Guard,” in an authoritative voice, and as if it were as easy as essay-writing ; but it is no light mandate for even the best and most obedient of players to obey. You are generally “ narrow ” or “ wide,” or “ short ” or “ strong,” or something else you shouldn’t be, and you are greeted accordingly, throughout the progress of the bowl, with some such remarks as these : “ Where *are* you coming to ? ” “ What *is* the good of you ? ” or in a reflective whisper, that can, however, be heard over the whole green, “ The stupid *idiot*, why did I ever choose him on my side ? ” To evade these observations, some persons—nay, I regret to write, some “ skips ”—will lay their bowl only a few feet before them, easily blocking the way of the following player, it is true, but that at a loss of self-respect, I should hope—and certainly of the respect of the next player—which it is needless and would be painful for me to enlarge upon. Such feelings of indignation, however, are transient as the bowls themselves, and leave as little trace behind them. At no time (not even when engaged in antagonistic measurement)

does the genuine—that is to say, the reflective—bowler become so outrageous in his sentiments as to preclude all hope of reconciliation, for well he knows his mortal enemy of the moment may be his sworn ally upon a reconstituted “side,” within the hour, whose bowls he will then have to stand by as by his own.

A bowling green is indeed no place for bad humour, but for pleasant companionship and a sort of decorous mirth, bearing no nearer relation to the vulgar merriment of a skittle-alley, than does a minuet to a jig. The time at which the game is generally played is propitious for active and yet unfatiguing amusement—the long cool evenings of summer, when the labours of the day are over, and nothing intervenes between man and his rest-chamber less pleasant than his supper. The place seems especially set apart for quiet recreation. It is almost always a retired spot, cut off from the thoroughfares of life, and is necessarily more or less agreeable to look at. The clean shaven, well rolled green, with its sloping banks of grass on the four sides, and the seats or garden chairs with which they are usually furnished, are objects that please every eye. The situation, too, of bowling greens is generally charming, either in its seclusion, or, if it be open, in the views which can be seen from it. When belonging to a town, they are commonly placed, for obvious reasons, in the outskirts; and if not, they are surrounded by high walls after the monastic fashion. The most beautiful bowling greens in England are to be found at Cambridge and Oxford. Whether the monks diverted themselves with bowls, I do not know; but if so, they must have tucked up their frocks pretty high, just as a “skip” I have in my mind’s eye tucks up his coat-tails—as though the sun were his fireplace, and he were warming himself thereby as in the reading-room of the club. How odd it must have looked to have seen them playing in their horsehair shirt-sleeves! How pleasant it must have been, when their game was over, to have refreshed themselves from the fruit trees upon their grand old walls, or in the surrounding garden, or it may be with a flagon of good ale from the buttery hatch! What

pleasant pictures of my own bygone time the thought of those old bowling greens calls up ! The restful evenings beneath the shadow of collegiate elms, when nothing stirred the summer air save the sound of far-off chapel tinklings, and the near thud of the huge bowls—far larger than in these degenerate days are made ; or at the river's side, to whose very brink we played, and watched, in pauses of the game, the fleets of shallops shooting by, and listened to the music of their oars : nor was the well-iced tankard lacking, I wot, nor eke the weed that maketh content the soul of man.

No matter : there be bowling greens elsewhere. I see one with my outward and physical eye ; I sit, even now, upon its sloping sward, and jot these thoughts down in my note-book, while my indignant "skip" upbraids me for my idle inattention. "You waste your time on nothing," cries my skip, not knowing that I am writing of himself. He is a fine sight when in the act of delivering his bowl, which he performs with a supernatural solemnity ; but when it has left his hand, he becomes a wonderful spectacle. He twists his fingers as though he were making a cat's cradle, and turns his hands one over the other as though he were washing them "with invisible soap in imperceptible water." He wheels upon one heel for axis, and watches the progress of his bowl with an agonised expression of countenance : he inclines his body as the bias inclines the bowl ; he becomes, indeed, so utterly one with that missile, that I am half surprised he does not revolve as it does, and lie on his back with his face to the sky when it has finished. If the bowl is good, he is careful to mention it, along with the information that he always sends good bowls ; if bad, he remarks that the company had better watch his second attentively, for it will be worth their while, since he has never been known to give two bad ones. My honoured "skip" has, however, only a just confidence in himself, and is the best player, perhaps, upon our green ; that is to say, with the exception of one person, whom a constitutional modesty—which has been already alluded to—prevents me from more particularly indicating.



BY LIMITED MAIL.



THINK there is no expenditure upon which persons of small means look back with such regret as on money spent in travelling. "There is nothing," as prudent housewives say, "to show for it." When you are once *there*, at the journey's end, you feel how very much better it would have been to have walked the distance. You have spent four pounds (suppose) in coming by first-class, and yet, behold there are a number of your fellow-creatures, very little more frouzy and wretched-looking than yourself, who have arrived simultaneously and with equal safety by the third-class, for thirty shillings! How nice it would be, you think, to have got that differential two-pounds-ten in your pocket, instead of having dropped it into the maw of a railway company, to be spent in amalgamation bills upon parliamentary lawyers! Very few people not in the Upper Ten Thousand can afford to despise two-pounds-ten; but, on the other hand, a very large number afford, or think they can afford, to despise third-class passengers.

We shrink, like the poet's too fastidious baronet, from "the raw mechanic's" dirty thumb — with which he is accustomed to point out objects of interest during a journey. We do not like to be offered the refreshment of gin out of a soda-water bottle, with a slice of that Bologna sausage which he has kept perhaps overlong in his hat, and wrapped round with his pocket-handkerchief. The angels doubtless weep to see vain man behaving in this manner to his fellow-mortal. Hospitality should never be rejected, however humble, nor a kind action despised. The meanness lies not in the meagreness of the fare, but in the pride of the wayfarer. Still, though a dinner of herbs, where love is, is better than a Guildhall banquet, sandwiches flavoured with garlic, and

spread upon the *Daily Telegraph* for a table-cloth, are not attractive to the palate, and least of all when anybody is looking on. I lunched once upon such a delicacy in the company of an intelligent and certainly a most hospitable journeyman stone-mason, and I shall never forget my foolish trepidation at the station we chanced to stop at during the repast. Suppose one's cousin in the Blues had happened to look in ! Shouldn't I have been the bluer of the two ? It is idle to affect to despise those social distinctions ; no gentleman—however philosophic—would relish leaving his friends on the platform to travel with their servants in the second-class. He may say he wouldn't mind, but he would mind ; and though he should lie on his back (after the impressive Eastern manner), and take oath to the contrary, this writer would not believe him.

Some feeble-minded persons endeavour to persuade themselves that the second-class is cooler and more pleasant in summer than the more expensive carriage ; but, at all events, they do not succeed in persuading others. Blinds, and curtains, and spring-cushions are far from being engines of discomfort ; nor can rattling windows, and a seat so shiny that we can scarcely keep on it, be desirable for travel. For the above reasons, I have almost always been a first-class passenger, and have expended much unnecessary moneys upon railways without the slightest acknowledgment from director or committee. They have plenty of votes of thanks and pieces of plate for comparatively unworthy objects, but to the persistent first-class passenger *who can't afford it*, they offer nothing whatever. And yet it is upon us they thrive, and not upon the few whose circumstances entitle them to travel luxuriously. Besides this extravagance consequent upon my thus being a victim to "Mrs. Grundy"—besides the ordinary high fare which I pay without any sort of justification—I find I cannot journey so cheaply as other travellers. My expenses are always about fifteen per cent. above those of any other person who accomplishes the same distance. I find it somehow necessary to surround myself before starting with a little library of "light literature,"

which I soon discover to be very heavy reading, and with "readable books" that I am quite unable to get through. I entomb myself in newspapers of all shades of opinions, which I skim over in a quarter of an hour, and then don't know how to get rid of. The very sight of them, crumpled, and crumby, and mysteriously smeared as they soon get to be, becomes hateful to me, and — raven-like — I hide them carefully away between the cushions, whence they are sometimes extracted by a too officious porter, and stuffed into my cab, as I leave the station, poor and penitent. I used to derive some amusement from "flying" these out of window on the railway, but that relaxation is now denied me. An old lady in the next compartment to mine once delayed the Great Western Express at Taunton, and terrified all the passengers about "a baby in long clothes," which, she insisted upon it, had been thrown out of some carriage past her window; and nothing would satisfy her until the station-master acceded to her prayer, that he would "set the telegraph in motion," which operation she seemed to consider was a remedy for every ill. I asked her whether she thought it was a girl or a boy, and she replied: "Oh, a girl; a dear little innocent girl!" But she was wrong there, for it happened to be the *Evening Mail*—with some half-dozen other newspapers wrapped up in it, of which I had vainly hoped never to hear again.

My body, too, has as many cravings as my mind. I purchase food at all the stations where it can be got, and I don't like it when I get it. Railway-pastry is an abomination, and where is one to put *that* to, I should like to know, without offence to anybody. A gigantic oyster *pâté*, with but one bite out of it, once presented itself to me for forty miles, stuck to the lamp outside my carriage, and maintained there by the speed at which we flew. Everybody who put his head out of window on that side must have seen it likewise, and to watch the thing loose its hold—like an exhausted bivalve—and fail and drop as the train slackened, was a sickening sight. Of course, in a journey of any length, I take care to equip myself with extra cushions, hot tins, &c.; and although

the company supplies these, I always reward the individual hand which ministers to my comfort. That touch of the hat from the guard is worth half-a-crown of anybody's money who is not a peer of the realm, which (by a singular freak of Nature, who has endowed me with all the tastes and characteristics of that titled class) I do not happen to be ; while he pantomime, as he picks up my shilling from the seat with the air of *recovery*—of having previously dropped it there himself—and murmurs, "Thank 'ee, Sir," with his head in the carpet-bag he places so carefully beneath me, is equally satisfactory in its degree. It is partly, perhaps, in consequence of these habits of mine, that I find all guards and porters excessively affable. In the gamut of social courtesy I would place government officials at the one end, and railway officials at the other, and it will be conceded by every one of experience, that I could not have paid the latter a neater compliment. Who ever heard of a public servant (as the former class is satirically termed) offering you even a chair to sit down upon, far less a pillow for the small of your back, and a stool to help make up a bed to sleep upon ? Yet these accommodations are offered to me whenever I travel by night upon any railway, and I am far from rejecting them.

They were placed in my carriage in January last, when I started for Z. in the limited mail from A. Ten hours of travel through impenetrable darkness and almost arctic frost lay before me, and I was certainly not to be blamed for making myself comfortable. I had half a mind to suffer some other people to come into the carriage, for the sake of their animal warmth, but upon the whole I decided to be alone : they might have objected to smoking, or made themselves obnoxious in some other respect.

It is a peculiarity of long railway journeys, that they are accomplished with much greater rapidity (comparatively speaking) than are short ones. Before I have fairly settled myself, and begun to draw pictures in my mind of the discomforts which second-class passengers must be suffering (which I always find very soothing and excusatory), we are at B. junction—a place which it quite wearies me to reach, when I chance not to be going any further, and by day. A

glare of lights, a trampling of feet, a ringing of bells, and we are away again ; tearing through the gloom with a threatening, ominous rattle, as though we defied the powers of air to stop us, and anon with a screech of triumph because they do not. The oscillation is considerable, but not unpleasant, and acts upon my system as the rocking of a cradle affects a well-principled infant. I like it. I like to lie, swayed from side to side in a half-dream, with every now and then a bump, which is not quite a jerk, to suggest that I must not go to sleep too soon, or I shall lose half the charm of the sensation. I like the short, sharp report as we shoot the bridges, and the long groan in the tunnel, where we get so very serious, and the gradually lighter tone we take as we come out of it, like a gentleman who has been near death's door, and in a sad fright, but is now convalescent, and all right again.

Whir-r-r ! What is that, if it isn't a cock-pheasant rising ? It must have been C., but my eyes were shut, and before I could open them, there was not a lamp within sight to show that we have been near the dwellings of men. How fast we are going ! And yet, because of the frost, we are warned to be very careful, and allowed forty-five minutes' "law" upon the whole journey. Why did they not strike the axles with hammers at B., too, as they did at A., and should do, the paper tells us, at every station ? But, after all, what do the papers know about it ? "The railway people must know best, of coursh," I mutter to myself ; and I say "of coursh," because I am getting drowsy. They are always particularly careful about these night trains ; the best wood, the best iron, the best steam—— Pshaw ! what nonsense am I talking to myself ? Did I say the best steam ? How sleepy I must have been ! Ha, ha ! Eh ? Oh, I thought somebody spoke. . . . I wonder whether that sound is the sea or no ! We must be near the sea now—the sea that I have always seen here (for I never travelled this way by night before), bright and sparkling, and specked with sails, but which now might be ink itself, for all that I can tell to the contrary. Suppose it *was* ink ; with the sand close by for drying purposes, what a capital place the seaside would be for authors ! The mention of

authors makes me even drowsier than before. . . . How lonely one feels, and yet how far from dissatisfied ! It is a world without a sun, but then there is nobody to dispute my supremacy in it. I seem to myself to be the one representative left of the great human family, and to be hurried about everywhere at fifty miles an hour, that all space may have the advantage of my presence. . . . Whir-r-r ! Another station, but which I cannot tell, for I have been asleep, and lost count. How cold it is ! I wish I had brought a third railway wrapper. Why does not the guard bring me another hot-water tin ? He might do it, if he had any real regard for me. Those guards can climb about, no matter at what pace we may be going. I gave him half-a-crown. The train is slackening speed. Heavens, what an ass I was to open that window ! What *could* I expect to see, except the reflection of my own face as I let it down ? The night-wind poured in like a knife, though it was but for an instant, didn't it ? It would have been more agreeable, after all, if I had somebody to speak to. I wish they had hammered those axles when we were at B. However, it is a comfort to think that the best iron, the best wood, and the best— The train *is* slackening. The engine shrieks like a benighted demon, and endeavours to "shake" upon a note altogether too high for it. Never mind. I don't let that window down again for ten collisions ; at least, I will be shattered to atoms, warm. What a despairing, hopeless yell that last was ! Our engine has given in ; it is vanquished, though it spurts and curses still. We are at K.—two hundred and fifty miles of journey done—and there is a quarter of an hour allowed for refreshments.

Another peculiarity of night trains is this, that there is somehow always more time to spare at the stopping stations than in the day ; this is perhaps because we expect to have less, and are therefore especially expeditious ; but, at all events, so it is. The train has disgorged a number of dishevelled, ill-looking persons from all classes, who crowd into the refreshment room. Their attire is disordered, their neckerchiefs awry, their eyes half-closed, their expressions stupid, and yet not unconscious of disrespectability. They swallow boiling coffee, which they in vain endeavour to cool with

boiling milk. They toss it off with grins of agony, and then scuttle off to the train again like rabbits to a warren. "There is no hurry," says the presiding priestess from behind her tea-urn (and how different looks she in her clean cap and cherry-coloured ribbons, from the rest of us!), but we believe her not. We have heard legends of persons who have been beguiled by that syren, and compelled to remain at K. for twenty-four hours. And yet the glorious creature, who has risen at 1 A.M. for our especial convenience, was no deceiver, though so fair! We have nearly five minutes to spare, after all. But is there not the State carriage to look at, brilliantly lighted up as for a feast, and doubtless inhabited by swells? The general public, therefore, surges that way, flattens its nose against the windows, perceives unmistakable nobility in the air and attitudes of the occupants—who are naturally disconcerted by the intrusion—and remarks that it is a fine thing to be lords and ladies. Upon this, "the suite" in the side carriage flattens *its* nose in turn from the inside, and denounces such conduct as reprehensible, and appeals to the authorities for redress.

"O yes, ah," returns the public; "we suppose we may look where we like in a free country;" and altercation would be imminent, but that the guard arrives, and reads the Riot Act with "Take your seats!" and so disperses the assembly.

Roar, rattle, jump, whir, on again through the night, half the dark way devoured, and the other half invisibly disappearing. It takes some time to reduce the excitement supervening upon the hot coffee and cold platform; but when we do sleep, we sleep all the heavier. Only once, in a half-dream, as the train stops at some place unknown, we hear, amid the ringing of axles, the words, "Not safe!" and the reply, "It will last to Z., depend upon it!" Did I really hear it? Stuff and nonsense! By the limited mail is always the safest travelling; the best wood, the best iron, the best steam—and I fall asleep again over my favourite formula.

I wake to perfect consciousness with a jerk that dislocates every bone in my body, and just in time to see the lamp extinguished, and hear both the windows fall down into their sockets with a crash. A long-forgotten picture of a farm-

house where I once lived in distant Westmoreland, and of the face of a friend that is dead, flashes unbidden across my mind, before it settles down upon the reality of my situation. The carriage is off the line, I know, for we seem to be going over a ploughed field of solid iron. It is awful travelling, for it may be the road that leads to Death. No, I hear the engine rattling its chains like a horrid ghost, as it breaks away from us. Thank Heaven, then, at least, it cannot take us over an embankment, to be dashed to pieces, or into a canal, to be drowned like cats in a bag. But awful shrieks from oppressed human beings turn my blood even colder than does the icy wind. Others, then, have not escaped as I have done, with fright and bruises. A lantern or two glimmer across my window, and I implore of the passers-by to open the door for me, which is jammed quite tight by the collision. I am informed, in a cold dry tone, that that is the business of the company's servants, and that it is indecorous of me to discommode a passenger amateur—to wit, the unknown speaker—by any such superfluous request. So I squeeze myself out of window, and drop down upon a heterogeneous heap of something—an assemblage of “the best wood and the best iron,” which has splintered off a neighbouring carriage. *That* carriage, however, still stands upon its wheels, in the counterfeit presentment of a carriage; but this which I am approaching, which has the lanterns round it, and the circle of dark forms, has no resemblance to a carriage whatever. It is a mere mass of ruin, without door, or window, or floor, or wheel, crushed and flattened together; and from within it come forth the shrieks that have grown fainter since I first heard them, and are fading into groans and murmurs. What I dimly discern cumbering the earth here was, a minute ago, a first-class carriage, filled with people sleeping, or eating, or getting their personal luggage ready for the terminus at Z., which they will now arrive at, poor creatures, in quite another fashion. What is to be done? Nothing *can* be done, says the grave guard, without pickaxes and crow-bars, which have already been sent for. A light has gone north and a light has gone south for these things, and for doctors and brandy, and, above all things, to stop the trains up and

down. In the meantime, we shiver in the cold and darkness (for one would as soon think of entering a carriage *now* for comfort, as a sepulchre), and the thirteen poor wretches under the ruin shiver, too, after a ghastlier manner.

"How did it happen?" enquires a passenger.

"Axle broke, Sir," interposes an official sharply. "They *will* break in these frosty nights."

"We told you at X. it would break," exclaims a voice indignantly.

"And they said it would last us to Z.," I chimed in on a sudden.

"Yes," confirms the voice, "they did ; and it's manslaughter, and nothing else."

Whereupon the official moves away from us into the gloom, as from persons who are dangerous for a well-regulated mind even to listen to.

We are still around the ruined carriage, comforting the unhappy folks as well as we can, when a great cry arises that the L. up-express is upon us, and there is a universal panic. The piteous wail of the wounded and imprisoned is unheeded (and, indeed, we are quite powerless to help them), and all who can do so leap into an enormous hedge which happens here to fringe the line. We see the fiery eyes at the mouth of the tunnel, and expect immediate ruin upon ruin ; but the engine-driver has perceived the danger signals, and is only bringing his train up to the halt. So we descend with more or less of difficulty from our unpleasant elevation, and I find that the thorns have (amongst other damages) grievously injured my hat.

Not until two hours are the victims liberated from their dreadful prison, for the axe and bar must be used tenderly, lest they hazard yet again the imperilled life. Many have broken bones and broken heads—they hold these latter with their hands, as though they were indeed splitting, but there is, thank God, no burden (such as we had all dreaded to behold) borne forth and carried away in silence, with a cloth over it, upon which, no matter what the shape it takes, is written Death. From that extremity of misfortune all are mercifully preserved, for the present at least ; but enough of woe has happened to make me sad and serious as I step into the special train that

has been sent from Z. to convey us and the wounded. It is not so, however, with my fellow-passenger, a commercial traveller of elastic disposition, who, as he takes his seat, finds something consolatory in travelling first class, after paying only second-class fare, even under such circumstances as ours.

"Ah," observed I gravely, "but it was a first-class carriage that was so smashed, remember."

"It was *so*, Sir," he assented cheerfully — "shivered to lucifer matches, Sir. I have been in half-a-dozen of these little accidents, and I know nothing can stand 'em ; no, not if you were in a cage of cast iron."

"Dear me," said I ; "but surely by the limited mail——"

"My dear, Sir," quoth he impatiently, and snapping his fingers, "the mail is limited, but not the liability of the passengers."

An official person, of sympathising aspect, and attired as though he were the chaplain to the company, here opened the door, and took down our names and addresses, with many earnest enquiries as to how we felt ourselves.

"That was very civil of him," observed I to the bagman, who had not made quite so light of his bruises to this kind enquirer as his high spirits had led me to expect he would have done : "it was certainly a most Christian attention."

"All humbug, Sir," replied my friend, "I assure you. Actuated by the purest commercial motives, he came to see that we were alive and well, and not in a condition to make any claim for compensation. He also wished to make a complete list of the passengers, lest more should pretend to be injured by the limited mail to-night than ever travelled by it."

"What a world of treachery and deceit we live in !" observed I, reflectively.

"Very much so, Sir," rejoined my philosophic companion ; "and let us be thankful we *do* live in it, and without broken bones."

"I hope at least," said I, "that those persons who have been less fortunate will obtain redress. I have injured my hat — you observe — my new hat, and shall myself demand another." And then I went on to tell him of what I had half-dreamed, half-heard about the axle lasting us to Z.

"In cross-examination, Sir, they would prove that you had dreamed the whole of it."

I then informed him how satisfactorily I had been corroborated by an unknown witness.

"Yes, Sir, and he will remain unknown, you may rely upon it, to all but the company's solicitors. No human being will ever hear of that too intelligent traveller again."

"Good Heavens!" cried I, appalled by the preternaturally significant manner of the speaker, "you do not mean to say that they will make away with him?"

"I do, though; just that, and no less. I don't mean to say," added he, assuringly, "that they will Burke him; but they will certainly make him safe. That was another of the reasons why that gentleman was so solicitous in his enquiries. And as for you, Sir, you will be convicted of 'conspiracy' and 'intent to defraud,' if you open your mouth."

By this time we had arrived at Z.; and I was glad enough to find myself in a hansom, unassisted by "the best steam," and upon the queen's highway.

I read in the second edition of that morning's paper, that the limited mail upon the A. and Z. Railway had met with "a slight delay" near the X. station, in consequence of the unavoidable breaking of the axle, and that some persons had suffered "contusions." Nobody ever got compensation, although many wanted it, for, as the bagman had predicted, the too intelligent witness was not forthcoming. As for me—my own application for a new head covering being treated with disdain—I was not going to be indicted for conspiracy for the sake of other people. Nevertheless, the thought does sometimes strike me that the commercial traveller may himself have been interested in dissuading me from such a course. Do the railway companies keep bagmen as well as chaplains always in readiness to run down to the scene of a calamity, I wonder? However that may be, ever since that "slight delay between X. and Z." I travelled by day-trains as long as the frost lasted; nor was I tempted again, notwithstanding "the best iron and the best wood," of which it is always constructed, into a limited mail.



A REALLY GOOD DAY'S FISHING.

I HAVE a most unfeigned admiration of good old Izaak Walton, and all fishermen ; I like to think of them as contemplative men, who might have been anything they chose — statesmen, divines, poets—only that they preferred being fishermen—lovers of their kind, lovers of scenery, lovers of all living things, and possessing some good and unquestionable proof that the worm which they thread alive upon their pitiless hook, and which, to the ordinary eye certainly seems not to like it, does not in reality suffer in the least. I confess I have been many times upon the verge of calling Piscator, my uncle, from whom I have expectations which such an appellation would ruin, a cruel and cold-blooded old villain for the quiet way in which he will torture his live bait—never taking the poor creature off until it has wriggled its last, and then instantly impaling a fresh victim—or selecting a lively minnow out of his green water-box, and throwing him into the pleasant river, his wished-for home, with a hook that he does not know of at first, poor thing, in his under-jaw. When he has done his duty even ever so well, and given warning of the approach of prey in the most sagacious manner by pulling at the float, and has been rescued alive, Jonah-like, from the interior of some enormous fish, Piscator will not yet suffer him to depart, but, confessing that he is a very good bait—as if that compliment could atone for these many indignities and pains—drops him again delicately into the stream ; conduct only to be equalled by that of the widow lady in the legend, whose late husband's body is discovered by her lover in the garden fish-pond, a receptacle for eels ; upon which, "Poor dear Sir Thomas," says the lady, "put

him in again, *perhaps he'll catch us some more.*" Worse than all, to my taste, looks my revered uncle, when he is running after a may-fly, in order to impale *that* : one can bear to see a boy in pursuit of a butterfly, because it is not so much cruelty that actuates him as curiosity ; but an old gentleman, bald, pursy—which epithet reminds me that I must not let Piscator peruse these remarks—and perspiring, striving to catch and put to death, under circumstances of peculiar atrocity, a happy and inoffensive insect, is a shameful sight. No ; I confess I like to see fishermen use artificial flies ; the mere hooking of the fish—which, after all, *are* meant to be eaten—through those horny, bloodless lips of theirs, I don't believe is very painful ; and I regard these baits with a clear conscience. A good fisherman's book is a museum of unnatural science, and I like to examine it gratis upon some river-bank, with a cigar in my mouth, while Piscator fishes. He sets about this new creation about October, and by April has finished quite a pocket-full of these additions to nature. This scarlet fly, almost as big as a bird of paradise, must have taken him a good long time. "It is a military insect, and a most tremendous bait for the female," says my uncle, who, I am thankful to say, is a confirmed old bachelor ; "there is nothing in that fine creature whatever except a little wood and wire ; but he kills, Bob—he kills."

Why, by-the-bye, do pursy old fellows, after fifty, almost without exception, repeat their words ?

"It *is* a fine day," observes Piscator, when I salute him in the morning—"a very fine day—a very fine day, indeed, Bob," as though there was somebody contradicting that assertion. "And your mother is well, is she Bob ? Your mother is well ? Good, Bob, good—very good." I think they have some idea that this makes an ordinary sentence remarkable, and they wish, perhaps, to give you an opportunity or two of setting it down in your note-book.

"What is this huge black and white fly, uncle," I enquire, "like an excellent imitation of a death's-head moth ?"

"Death's-head fiddlestick !" cries Piscator, in a fury, "it's

nothing of the kind, Bob—nothing of the kind. I call it the Popular Preacher, and it also is a good bait for the female—the serious female, that is. I have killed a number of chub with that fly, Sir—a number of stout chub.”

There is a sort of box, also, attached to Piscator's book which contains even still more wonderful effigies ; spinning minnows, twice as large as any in real life, and furnished with Archimedean screws ; mice with machinery inside instead of intestines, and composite animals—half toad, half gergoyle—of which pike are supposed to become readily enamoured.

What a glorious amusement must indeed be that of the fly-fisher, climbing up in his huge waterproof boots the bed of some rock-strewn stream, amid the music of a hundred falls, and under the branching shelter of the oak and mountain ash, through which the sunbeams weave such fairy patterns upon his watery path ! I never could throw a fly myself by reason of those same branches ; I left my uncle's favourite killer—brown, with a yellow stripe—at the top of an inaccessible alder, on our very last expedition together, just after we had taken a great deal of trouble, too, in its extrication from the right calf of Piscator, where I had inadvertently hitched it. I am too clumsy and near-sighted, and indeed much too impatient for the higher flights of fishing. Piscator starts in the dusk, in order to be up at some mountain-tarn by daylight, and comes back in the evening with half-a-dozen fine trout, well satisfied ; now I would much rather have half-an-hour's fishing for bleak in a ditch with a landing-net. However, I do rise to gudgeon-fishing.

I know no pleasanter and more dream-like enjoyment than that I have often experienced on the bank of some ait (which some ingenious persons still spell “eyot”) in the bosom of old Father Thames ; or, better still, on an arm-chair in a punt pitched in one of his back-waters. Let a little beer be in the boat and some tobacco, with perhaps a sympathising friend ; then what a scene it is ! Before us, the great roomy eel-pots are hanging idle over the foamy lasher, in waiting

for the night ; their withy bands seem dry and rotten enough in the sunshine, but they are good enough for many a summer yet ; beyond them lies the round island where the bending osiers dip their green heads into the flood till they be needed ; in its centre, is the large leafless nest of her, "born to be the only graceful shape of scorn," the river swan ; and around it grow those "starry river buds," the lilies ; on the right hand, stately woods slope up from the very bank to the horizon ; on the left is the miller's garden, upon an island likewise, with the high broad mill-stream running swiftly on its eastern shore, almost upon a level with the flowers ; clack, clack, goes the great clumsy wheel, whose shining paddles we see disappear, one after one, under the low dark archway ; and whirl, whirl, go half a score of little wheels within the bowels of the quaint old wooden house : along the main stream, beyond the mill-race, and separated from it by another island, ply the heavy-laden barges with half-a-dozen horses apiece, on one of which the lazy driver sits, like a lady, sideways, with his red woollen cap drooping upon one side, and his pipe scarcely kept alight ; market-people are returning along the towing-path, many with weighty baskets on their heads, but all have a word or a smile for us of the river ; pleasure-boats pass in the distance filled with ladies, with brass bands, with racing crews ; the locksman sees them from his lofty post, and the huge gates slowly part to let them through ; all this we watch afar off, and have no part with the great stream of existence regarded from its calmest of back-waters. As for the fishing itself, that is very pleasant ; I always look away when the man puts on the gentle ; and my friend and I have shilling bets upon which catches the next fish. We did bet at least at one time, until I detected him in the ingenious but fraudulent manœuvre of pulling the same perch up again and again, by which he not only won half-a-sovereign of me, but gloried in his shame. I love the very dropping of the boat from "pitch" to "pitch ;" the careful fixing of it between its two bare poles ; the measuring with the plummet for length of line ; the chucking the bread and meal in for the

gratuitous entertainment of the fish ; the grating of the iron rake in the pebbly bottom ; and all the machinery which is set in motion to persuade me that I am doing something and not nothing.

Better than all, perhaps, is the after-entertainment at the old-fashioned river inn, where jack is stuffed in some peculiarly fragrant manner, or there is an especial patent for frying trout ; where awful specimens of both those fish, with particularly protuberant eyes, are suspended in the low-roofed cosy dining-room, along with the portrait of some famous fisherman, and the rules of the local angling club. The heroes of these places are not insolent and puffed up with knowledge, as hunters and shooters for the most part are, but freely and graciously impart intelligence to the unlearned. I confess at once that I have caught but two perch all day ; my friend, three perch ; and Jones, the man, about eight dozen. "Ay, ay, and very well too," observes the landlord ; "Jones is a good rod ; you should have tried Miller's Hole with the minnow ;" and so on. I have fished for bigger fish than perch. I once went out—went in, I should say, to spear barbel ; that is a very splendid and almost warlike amusement. You see the leviathan reposing upon the pebbles beneath ; silently, softly, you seize a long barbed spear, and measure the distance between you and your prey exactly ; you think it to be about four feet, whereas the real depth of water is six feet at the very least. Striking, under this impression, with all your force, you throw yourself into the river, arrive upon the very spot which the barbel recently occupied, and are lucky if you can swim as well as he. Whenever I attempt anything above my perch, indeed, I fail miserably ; "the party" who occupied my seat in the punt on the previous day had caught so many trout, he could not carry half of them away with him ; and "the party" who comes the day afterwards, again, is equally successful ; but, for me, I might just as well have baited my hook with a pack of cards. However, at the end of this last summer, I had one really good day's fishing, killing with my single rod carp and trout, of such magnitude and number as Piscator

himself would have been proud to tell of ; and it came to pass in this way.

The Marquis of B——, whom I call “B.” in conversation with strangers—is a good friend of mine, who has known me for many years. If he met me in the market-place of our borough, his lordship would, I am sure, say : “How d’ye do?” or, “How are you?” and thank me, perhaps, for the pains I took about the return of his second son. I have dined more than once at the Hall, during election time, and his lordship has not failed to observe to me : “A glass of wine with you?” or, “Will you join us, my dear Sir?” quite confidentially upon each occasion ; the words may be nothing indeed, but his lordship’s manner is such that I protest that when he speaks to me I feel as if *I had had the wine*. Well, only a month ago, he sent me a card, permitting me to have one day’s fishing in his home preserves. Piscator tried to persuade me to give it up to *him*, but I said “No,” because he can catch fish anywhere, and I do not possess that faculty ; so he gave me the most minute directions overnight, and lent me his famous book of flies, and his best rod.

How beautiful looked the grand old park upon that August morning ! The deer—

“ In copse and fern,
Twinkled the innumerable ear and tail,”—

cropping with reverted glance the short rich herbage, or bounding across the carriage-drives in herds ; the mighty oak-trees, shadowing half-an-acre each ; the sedgy pools, with water-fowl rising from their rims with sudden cry ; and the winding brooks, where shot the frequent trout from side to side. Now from their right banks I fished—now from their left ; and now, regretful that I did not borrow Piscator’s boots, I strode, with turned-up trousers, in the very bed of the stream ; still, I could not touch a fin. I began to think that my uncle had given me, out of envy, wrong directions, and provided me with impossible flies. At last I came upon a large brown pool, with a tumbling fall ;

and "Now," cried I aloud, "for a tremendous trout, or never!"

"Never," cried a hoarse voice, with provincial accent; "I'm dang'd if thee isn't a cool hand, anyway."

This was the keeper. I saw how the case stood at once, and determined to have a little sport of some kind, at all events.

"Hush, my good man," I whispered, "don't make a noise; I have reason to believe that there are fish here."

"Woot thee coom out of t' stream [it was up to my waist], or maun I coom in and fetch thee?"

"No," said I blandly, "don't come in on any account, the least splash would be fatal: stay just where you are, and I dare say you will see me catch one in this very spot. It's beautiful weather."

I got out upon one bank, as the giant, speechless with rage, slipped in from the other. When he had waded half-way across—

"Do you think I am poaching, my good man?" enquired I innocently.

"I knaws thee is't," quoth the keeper, adding a violent expletive.

"Well, I have a card here from my friend B.," said I, "which I should have thought was quite sufficient."

"Thy friend B.!" roared the other sarcastically, "let me get at thee."

"Yes," said I, "old B. of the Hall; don't you know him?—the marquis."

The dripping savage was obliged to confess that my ticket of permission was genuine.

"But how do I knaw as thee beest the right man as is named here?" urged he obstinately.

A cold sweat began to bedew me, for I had not thought it necessary to bring out my visiting cards.

"Right man!" cried I indignantly; "of course I am, why not?"

"Of coorse, why of coorse," sneered the brutal ruffian, "thee must coom along with me."

A bright thought suddenly flashed across me : " Look here, my good man ; look at my pocket handkerchief ; J. P. ; aint those the right initials ? Confound you, would you like to see the tale of my shirt also ? I'll tell B. of you, as sure as you live." At which the giant, convinced against his will, left me in peace.

I fished until dewy eve, and still caught nothing. At last, in the near neighbourhood of the Hall itself, I came upon a little pond environed by trees ; the fish were so numerous in it, that they absolutely darkened the water. I had only just lodged my fly upon the surface, and, behold ! I caught and easily landed a magnificent carp ; again, and a trout of at least six pounds rewarded me ; a third time, and I hooked another carp ; and so on. I was intoxicated with my success. In the couple of hours of daylight which yet remained to me, I filled not only Piscator's largest fishing-basket, but my pockets also. " What will my uncle say to this ?" thought I. He did not know what to say. We dined, we supped, we breakfasted off the very finest ; we spent the next morning in despatching the next best in baskets to distant friends. I was the hero of the family for four-and-twenty hours, although Piscator tried to make out that it was all owing to the excellence of his flies. At four o'clock on the following afternoon, however, arrived my friend the keeper, taller than ever, pale with passion, more inimical-looking than on the day before.

" Well, thee hast about been and done it with thy ticket and thy friend B.," quoth he.

" Yes," said I cheerfully, " you're right : I rather flatter myself I have. Sixty-seven pounds of fish, my man" (triumphantly).

" Sixty-seven pounds !" said he, with a ghastly grin.

" Ay," said I, " not an ounce less : thirty pounds of carp, twenty pounds of trout, and seventeen pounds of — I'm hanged if I know what fish."

" Thirty pounds of carp, twenty pounds of trout, and seventeen pounds of he's hanged if he knows what fish," repeated the keeper, as if he was going to cry.

"Yes," added I ; "and all out of one little bit of a pond."

"Pond !" cried Piscator, entering the room at this juncture, "you never told me anything about a pond, Bob."

"Well—no," said I, blushing a little. "I confess I thought it better to say stream. I did catch them in the pond close by the Hall."

"Why, you've been fishing in the marquis's private stew, Bob !" cried my uncle, horror-struck.

"Yes," cried the keeper, blowing into his fists, as if preparing for a murderous assault upon my countenance ; "he's been a fishing in the stew-pond, in his friend B.'s private stew."

And this was the only really good day's fishing I ever had.



OUR WIDOW

AND OTHER TALES.

OUR WIDOW.



HONESTLY believe that there breathes no human creature in the enjoyment of a thousand a year and upwards with a greater sense of respectability than myself. I mention the income, because the richer one is, the more temptation there seems to be in some cases to set respectability at defiance. It is understood to be a virtue of the middle rather than of the upper classes. The best society, I am afraid, is a little inclined to pooh-pooh it; the Fitz-Joneses term it conventionalism, and agree that it is very necessary to be attended to by the plain Joneses, but as for themselves, they can afford to 'do things.' And such 'things' as they do do! I more especially refer to the female Fitz-Joneses. Those picnic riding-parties to Richmond, for instance, where they don't meet their chaperons until *after* they get to the *Castle* or the *Star and Garter*. Such is my sense of propriety, that I really don't think I could have joined one of those expeditions even in

my worst bachelor-days. The 'accidental' meetings in the Row, again, of the same persons, would have been to my mind simply shocking. If such were my feelings before my Julia became Mrs. Starch Primmer, you may imagine that I *now* regard all these goings on with even severer reprobation. Julia herself protests that I am too severe, and sometimes twits me with it in her affectionate and charming way. At the club, I know I am set down as a consummate hypocrite by Major Tattel and others of that wicked set; but to all their gibes I am accustomed to reply calmly: 'Jeer on, sons of Frivolity; I am content to be upon Virtue's side, even though I be there alone'—or words to that effect.

In a word, until April last, there was not a more well-conducted head of a family—a phrase I take from the Census-paper, for dearest Julia and myself have not been blessed with children—in all Belgravia than your humble servant, nor one that felt more confident of keeping his good name. In the month of March, however, arrived our widow from India. She had a double claim upon the hospitality of the house of Starch Primmer; for she had been my wife's bosom-friend at school; and — and —— Well, she might at one time have been Mrs. Starch Primmer, but for circumstances over which *I* at least had no control. She had chosen to prefer Mulligar Tawney of the Burrampooter Irregular Cavalry, with his notoriety and swagger and debts, to my humble self. Heaven knows I did not blame her. I had my own opinion, however, of Mulligar Tawney, which was fully justified by what subsequently took place. His constitution, originally of iron, had shown symptoms of giving way, before his return to India; when he got there, it broke down. High play in 'the Hills,' whither he went to 'set himself up,' as the wretch called it (he was full of slang), emptied his pocket, or rather hers, poor thing—for he never had a five-pound note of his own—and brandy pawnee finished the work which bitter beer had begun. When a man once stoops to folly of *an* sort—as I have more than once observed—there is *no* knowing where he will find himself eventually. I

me. It is a rule always to speak with charity of the dead, but Tawney was a brute in spurs. I repeat, I do not blame Clementina—Tina I used to call her at one time, so that you may be sure, with my strict notions of propriety, that the affair had advanced some distance—but how she *could* have allied herself with that hairy ruffian will always be a marvel to me. It was wrong of her to confide to a mutual friend—who not only repeated it to myself, but to others—that I was a ‘muff;’ but I have forgiven her even that. And when she just now returned to her native land, I am sure there was no old friend more ready to welcome her—I don’t say with open arms, because our positions precluded anything of that sort now, and the very metaphor would be reprehensible—more ready to welcome her to hearth and home than Augustus Starch Primmer.

Of course our previous mutual relation rendered her coming excessively embarrassing, not to *her* indeed, as it turned out, but to *me*; and I seriously consulted my wife upon the propriety of locating our widow in the neighbouring hotel. But Julia said—I thought at the time a little testily, but the dear creature was suffering from brow-ague: ‘My dear Augustus, fiddle-de-dee; you are as prudish as Miss Forté Somers. If *I* don’t mind dear Clementina’s coming, you certainly need have no objection. With this tic about me, I could not go out even so far as the *Grosvenor*. She must be our guest, of course, and I do hope you will make her visit as pleasant as you can; for unless I get better, I can take her nowhere.’

‘Take her, my dear! You surely would not have me escort Mrs. Mulligar Tawney *alone* anywhere?’

‘Well, that’s as *she* likes, Augustus. If *she* doesn’t mind, and *I* don’t mind, *you* surely need have no objection. Indian life is so different; and Captain Tawney was so queer, by all accounts, that I dare say we shall find her less conventional——’

‘My darling, I don’t like that word,’ interrupted I gravely.

‘When I have the brow-ague, Mr. Starch Primmer, I take the first word that comes.’

Perceiving that dearest Julia had understood my meaning, though without yielding to its force, I argued the matter no further, but braced myself up for the trying moment when Clementina and I were to meet for the first time after an interval during which our lines of life had so diverged. I stayed away from the City the whole day on which she was expected, for I was in that tremor that I felt unable to attend to business; and when I saw from the drawing-room window the three cabs arrive, the roofs whereof bore Clementina's wardrobe, and in one of which she was, I am sure if there had been a back-door to the house, I should have made my escape upon the instant. There was a roaring in my ears, such as takes place when one keeps one's head too long under water, and the next thing I heard distinctly was: 'Why, 'Gus, dear, don't you know me?'

And there was Clementina Mulligar Tawney with both her hands outstretched for mine, and looking as bewitching as ever. She was altered, of course, but by no means for the worse. Her delicate cheeks had taken a tinge of brown from the eastern sun, which did not misbecome them; her crisp brown hair was as luxuriant as ever, and her blue eyes as lustrous; she had but undergone a sort of fairy change, which had transformed her from a blonde to a brunette. But she was a girl no longer: her attitude and manner were those of one accustomed to be obeyed; her voice, although low and clear, was very incisive, and its ring gave me great satisfaction, for it convinced me that that man in the Burrampooters had not had it all his own way. I repeated a few formal phrases, which I had prepared for this dreaded interview, and then Clementina swept away to embrace her 'own sweet Julia,' who was upon the sofa in her boudoir sipping quinine. The rapidity of our widow's movements, considering her Indian experience, was bewildering; while her conversation reminded me of nothing so much as an exhibition of fireworks. My ideas were dreadfully upset by the whole transaction, but that which was uppermost was, that she had called me 'Gus, and would probably do it again. Why, even dearest Julia had never ventured

short of Augustus. I hoped that this demonstrative female did not expect that I should return to 'Tina.'

As time went on, and my wife's 'tic' with it—as though it were the pendulum—Mrs. Mulligar Tawney began, as I had apprehended, to find Buckram Terrace exceedingly slow. She was a widow, and rather a recent one, but as she told me herself, with an epigrammatic force which I am unable to convey, she had left the country of Suttee, and did not intend to sacrifice herself to her husband's memory. Dearest Mulligar having fallen a victim to the climate of that dreadful country, was a circumstance she could never forget, but it was flying in the face of Providence to refuse to take a little relaxation. The suggestion of a little stroll through the Museum of South Kensington (where one sees nobody but scientific people, who are rarely scandal-bearers) was received with a ringing laugh.

'Thank you very much, 'Gus; but I don't care for museums. You need not trouble yourself either to propose attending a May meeting in Exeter Hall, which I perceive you have in your mind [which was perfectly true]. What I want, as my own sweet Julia's kindness has already detected, is a little lark of some sort. She says you have plenty of money, and that I may do just what I like with you. No, look here, 'Gus: the weather is charming: you shall take me down to Richmond, and give me a treat at the *Star and Garter*. There!'

'No, *not* there,' returned I emphatically, while the perspiration came out upon my forehead in three distinct rows of beads. 'Mrs. Mulligar——'

'Call me Clementina,' interrupted she with a bewitching smile, 'or else I shall positively think it wrong to call you 'Gus. The idea of there being anything wrong between dear old Starch Primmer and anybody!' And then she laughed in a manner which I cannot but characterise as forward.

'As for my age, Clementina,' returned I gravely, 'I regret for many reasons that I am not able to arrest the progress of time——'

'There, now, I have vexed you,' cried Clementina with

her blue eyes swimming in tears ; 'you who are ~~so~~ good and kind. I won't ask to go anywhere, I'm sure. It's quite enough for a lone widow like me to be offered a hospitable roof, without having little treats at the Stut-tut-tar and Gug-gug-garter.'

'Dearest Tina,' cried I, shocked beyond expression (and even propriety) by this method of putting the matter, 'I assure you, if I was not so occupied every day in the City, nothing would give me——'

'Why not go then on a Sus-sus-Sunday?' sobbed the irrepressible widow. 'I am sure there is no harm in enjoying upon that day the trees, the green fields, and wh-wh-whitebait.'

'Pray, pray, don't cry, Mrs.—Clementina, I mean : you shall go wherever you like,' exclaimed I despairingly ; for if she had gone on like that another minute, I believe I should have cried too.

'*Next* Sunday, then,' rejoined the widow from behind her pocket-handkerchief : 'is that a promise, 'Gus?'

'Yes,' groaned I ; 'that is, if it's fine,' for I knew the barometer was falling.

'Then I've won six pair of gloves,' cried Clementina, clapping her hands, 'for Julia bet me half-a-dozen to one that I should never get you to do it.' And with that, her red petticoat flashed up stairs, and immediately afterwards peals of laughter from the two conspirators rang out from the boudoir.

The remainder of the week, my mind was occupied with meteorology, and aspirations for the fine weather to break up. But on Saturday, the gentleman in charge of that department in my newspaper foretold immediate tempests, and I felt that my doom was sealed. I knew that the next morning would show an unclouded sky. It would be painful to me to describe in detail my endeavours to mitigate the force of public opinion before I started with our widow upon that unparalleled expedition. How I remarked unceasingly before the butler that I had known Clementina ever since she was *so* high, and considered myself to be her second father ; for I felt that an explanation, if not an apology, was due to so respectable

a household as our own. By ordering the brougham at ten o'clock, I had been in hopes that the more charitable of my neighbours would imagine that our widow and myself were going to some place of worship at a great distance, such as St. Paul's; but that was a plan she would not hear of.

'I go in a hansom, my dear 'Gus, or I don't go at all,' observed she with decision. 'The idea of being "stived up" in a close carriage on such a lovely day as this! In a hansom, and through Richmond Park——'

'Julia!' interrupted I, in an agony, appealing to my wife, still martyred by her tic, for rescue, 'do speak to her, instead of laughing in that foolish way, which is certain to make your head worse. Do tell her how contrary to propriety it is—how quite out of the question——'

'My dear Augustus,' responded Julia, with all the gravity she could muster, but not without a malicious twinkle in her eyes, 'I think it will do you both all the good in the world. After being moped so long in a sick house, a little expedition of pleasure is just what you want; and as for dear Clementina, she has set her heart upon the hansom, I know.'

Deserted by my natural protectress, there was nothing for it but to submit to the relentless widow; and five minutes afterwards we were being whirled down Buckram Terrace in the wished-for vehicle, yet not so rapidly as to escape the censorious comments of the inhabitants.

Where could Mr. Starch Primmer be going to at such a pace with that young woman, just when everybody else was going to church?

'I protest I have not felt so jolly,' exclaimed Clementina with enthusiasm, 'since poor dear Mulligar fell a victim to that dreadful climate.'

It was not till we got to Hammersmith Bridge that I began to recover myself, or was able to make any effort to be agreeable to my fair companion. 'Here,' said I, 'is where the university boat-race took place last month.'

'What! and you never brought me to see it,' cried our widow with mock-indignation. 'Oh you wicked, wicked

man!' and she tapped my arm with her parasol, in a manner that expressed she had forgiven me nevertheless.

'Sorry to interrupt,' exclaimed a dreadful voice immediately over our heads, 'but which gate of the park are you agoin' in at?'

I could not have replied, even if I had known what to say, which I did not. A half-formed resolution of throwing this eaves-dropper into the river, flashed across my brain, but I could decide upon nothing. I had only one determination, and that was of blood to the head.

'The Robbin 'Ood gate is as good as any,' continued the driver; 'only they don't let 'ansoms in at no gates, only private carridges.'

'There,' cried I, 'Clementina; you see what comes of taking this sort of vehicle. 'Pon my word, I think we had better go back again.'

'Not a bit on it, Sir; you need not disappoint the young lady,' resumed this wretch confidentially. '*I can* manage it, bless you, if you'll only leave it to me.'

And with that, he shut down the trap, and I could hear him chuckling to himself outside in a way which, to say the least of it, was anything but respectful.

Clementina was in such convulsions of laughter that I could get her to listen to nothing serious, so we drove on in silence over Barnes Common, and by a number of respectable houses, the occupants of which, issuing forth to church in family procession, regarded us with a sort of malevolent pity. Presently the driver pulled up in front of a roadside inn—not an ivy-covered hostelry such as we associate with early hours and pastoral habits, but a regular public-house, such as might have come out into the country for the day from Whitechapel—and demanded a glass of beer and a hammer.

'How dare you stop at this dreadful place?' cried I, dashing at the trap-door with my umbrella; but the ferule went into space, for the man had already descended, and thereby escaped impalement. Then there was a terrible knocking at the back of the cab, and presently a shout of triumph. 'There, I've been and took the number off, and now we're a private vehicle,' explained the driver

coming round to the front and exhibiting the tin badge by way of trophy; 'and if the old woman don't let us through, why, then, I'll drive over her.'

And we very nearly did drive over her. She made an ineffectual attempt to shut the gate in our faces, and although our Jehu shouted out: 'It's the gentleman's own carriage; don't you see it aint got a number on?' it is my belief she would have done it, but that he got our horse's head in, and the wheels followed perforce. If the ranger ever gives pensions to those park-servants who almost perish in the performance of their duties, I am sure he owes one to that heroic female. I never felt so hot, or so altogether ashamed of myself, as during that frightful altercation, during which I remained quite passive; but a mile and a half of the fresh air of the forest revived me mightily, and when Clementina suggested a little walking, I assented with cheerfulness. We sent the hansom on to the inn, with instructions to call for us after our early dinner; and having thus severed our connection with that disreputable vehicle, I felt that I could almost enjoy myself. How exquisite was the woodland scene; how musical the voices of the birds, and how altogether enjoyable the leafy sol——, no, *not* solitude. The idea of Richmond Park being a pleasant lounge in that sort of weather, had apparently struck other Londoners beside ourselves. I say Londoners, because Pall Mall was written very legibly upon most of them, and especially on a couple of old fogies sauntering up directly towards us, and poisoning the balmy air with the smoke of their cigars. The next instant, I would have taken my own risk in an earthquake if it had only swallowed up for certain one of those two men. I shut my eyes so tight that I saw sparks, but not before I had seen Tattel of the *Mcgatherium*, and felt sure that the recognition had been mutual.

'Did you know that old gentleman?' asked Clementina carelessly, when they had passed by.

'Yes,' said I with assumed calmness; 'but I don't like him. I had no intention of speaking to him.'

'He seemed rather to avoid *us*,' remarked the widow.

‘Yes,’ returned I ; ‘the dislike is mutual.’ But well I knew that, though the major was too discreet to speak to me just then, I should hear enough of that meeting of ours when I next went to the club.

The wretch kept dogging us for two hours, and engaged a table in our immediate vicinity in the saloon at the *Star and Garter*, for it may easily be imagined that I was not going, under the circumstances, to take a private sitting-room. I could hear him laughing in his horrid cynical manner, and repeating to his friend my phrase about ‘preferring to be on Virtue’s side, and alone ;’ and I never enjoyed a good dinner so little in all my life.

While our widow was putting on her cloak, I went up and shook hands with him.

‘That’s a friend of my wife,’ said I carelessly—‘a charming person.’

‘She looks that,’ observed the major significantly. ‘Mrs. Starch Primmer is not with you, I presume.’

‘No,’ said I quietly. ‘The fact is, we have got separated from our party.’

I am not sure that this observation—though I made it with the best intentions—was consonant with my general devotion to truth. But what was I to say to a man like Tattel, and at so short a notice ? It would have taken an hour and a half to have satisfactorily explained our widow.

‘Ah, indeed,’ responded he coolly ; ‘how unfortunate ! But it often happens to this crowded hotel.’

It was early, and there was not a soul in that enormous coffee-room beside ourselves.

Almost immediately after Clementina’s return, the waiter, who had had his orders, came to inform us that our carriage was at the door. As we left the room, I saw Tattel rush to a window which looked out into the road. I afterwards heard his voice remarking above our heads : ‘So, you see, the whole party must have come in a hansom.’

Plunged in melancholy, I sat silent in that horrid vehicle. The unsuspecting Clementina, on the contrary, was in the highest spirits.

'How dearest Mulligar, if that dreadful climate had but spared him, would have enjoyed a day like this! Now, be sure, 'Gus, we walk through Kew Gardens; Julia arranged the whole plan for me before we started. The hansom drops us at this end of them, and meets us afterwards at the grand entrance. How thirsty that sauce *à la Tartare* has made me. I should so like an orange.'

As we walked through those splendid grounds, thronged with ten thousand holiday-makers, she demanded this vulgar fruit with such pertinacity, that I was tempted to break into the orangery, and pluck her one off the tree. At the Kew entrance, there were five hundred vehicles of all descriptions; but our peculiar hansom—red with yellow wheels—was apparent at the first glance.

'Home,' cried I—'home!' in a voice of pathetic earnestness.

'But stop at the first place you come to where there are oranges,' added Clementina.

Before the yellow wheels had made half-a-dozen revolutions, they were arrested in front of the stall of an itinerant trader. Upon two planks over an empty barrel were displayed, in luscious profusion, ginger-beer, slices of cocoa-nut, penny whistles, toffy, wooden dolls, and ORANGES. The enormous carriage traffic had to be delayed in that crowded place, while I leaped down amid jeers, and seized upon half-a-dozen of the wished-for delicacies. In my hurry and confusion, I forgot to pay for them, and was pursued by the proprietress of the establishment with shocking outcries. In my alarm and shame, I threw her half-a-sovereign instead of sixpence, and then sunk back in a sort of stupor.

Before I recovered myself, Clementina had got through all the oranges, and pronounced herself refreshed.

We were already in the neighbourhood of Belgravia, and it was some comfort to think that nobody we now met need have a suspicion that we had come from such a place as Kew Gardens; and yet such is the power of conscience—in the virtuous—that I fancied the better class of passengers seemed to turn round and regard us with reproving looks. In Buckram Terrace, this was

even more the case than elsewhere, and when the butler opened the door to us, I distinctly heard him murmur : 'Gracious Evans !'

As I rose to leave the hated vehicle, these circumstances were fully explained. Clementina had quietly dropped her orange-peel over the little door, and upon the gangway of the hansom there lay what looked like the *débris* of sixty oranges instead of six.

Words are wanting to describe the nature of my reflections—and of those of other people's—upon the events of that day with our widow ; but I may observe that next morning there was a visible increase in the number of gray hairs in my whiskers : another such experience would make me an old man.

Since the above catastrophe, I have been placed in several false positions with respect to Mrs. Mulligar Tawney, nor do I know how to estimate the loss that my character, through her exceeding naturalness, has sustained. Dearest Julia protests that her simplicity is charming, but for my part I should prefer her artificial. Compelled to take her out in the inevitable hansom, to see the illuminations upon the night of the Queen's birthday, we got 'blocked' in Saville Row opposite Poole's crystal pillars. 'Separated from their party again, by Jove, Tattel,' observed a voice I knew.

'And fortunately with the same fair companion,' returned the military cynic.

'Well, it's a comfort to think it's *the same*,' rejoined the first voice. And then there was a malicious titter.

'Drive on,' cried I, in terrible tones, through the trap-door ; 'I will pay for all you may run over.'

I had somehow not thought it worth while to go down to the club since that day at Richmond ; and I have now sent in my resignation as a member of the *Megatherium*. To get rid of our widow, thus encouraged by dearest Julia, is out of the question. I have therefore made up my mind to enter parliament, for the purpose of introducing into this country the system of Suttee (opposed by Clementina for such obvious reasons), with a particular proviso that the act shall be retrospective.



MR. BULLION'S REVENGE.

F *didicisse fideliter artes really emollit mores*, it would appear that the bank-clerks of the metropolis, as a class, though certainly not without many exceptions, have had that part of their education strangely neglected. Perhaps, as the possession of much money rather puffeth up than conduceth to humility, it may be from some effect of the mere handling of gold and silver that courteous manners are so often wanting in this body of public servants. However it be everyone must have remarked how difficult it is to get a civil answer to a question, or an answer at all, across a banker's counter; how even the unprotected female is so rarely able to win from them a smile or a bow. Let it not be urged that the gentlemen whose mission it is to count bank-notes with a wet finger, or shovel out sovereigns by the half-hundred, cannot behave better if they would, since, if any customer enters who is known to have a heavy balance in his favour, and who desires to see the manager in his private room, their civility becomes as remarkable as was their previous indifference.

Of course, there are some circumstances to be adduced in mitigation: a mistake in their accounts is of more importance than it would be in those of other trades, and their attention is therefore more closely demanded; they have always, too, to be on their guard against deception. Still, a respectable majority of those who enter the swing-

doors of such establishments are neither thieves nor forgers ; they have the right accorded by the law itself, to be considered innocent unless proved otherwise ; and the air of mingled suspicion and insolence with which they are too often regarded by the money-changers, is therefore quite indefensible. I dare say these spruce and dapper officials have not seldom very stupid people to deal with ; but even with these they should have patience ; while it should be remembered, that a knowledge of the latest rate of discount does not exhaust the fountains of human intelligence, and that they may perhaps be treating as an ignoramus one who, upon all other subjects, is infinitely better informed than themselves. Indeed, it is rather the trustful habit of persons of learning and genius to put themselves in the hands of their lawyers, doctors, and men of business, imagining, with touching simplicity, that those who have wholly applied themselves to a single branch of study are likely to have mastered it ; and these, therefore, are often the least informed about such matters as bankers have to do with, and therein especially subject themselves to the slights of the gentry whom I have in my mind. It is a very flimsy defence to urge in favour of any class of people, that they have no time for civility, since railway guards are well known to be the politest of men ; and, moreover, the rudeness of bank-clerks is often a *loss* of time, since they have to explain to ladies the meaning of their barbarous slang of *Long or short ?* or *How'll you have it ?* after all.

It is at the Bank of England, I think, that these uncivilised habits culminate ; so that upon dividend-day you might almost imagine, if ignorant of the meaning of City terms, that all the bears of the Stock Exchange had been sworn in for the purpose of transacting the business of the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street upon that particular occasion. I don't know how the appointment of a bank-clerk is obtained, but I strongly recommend if there be any intellectual ordeal in the shape of examination, that it should for the future comprehend the primary elements of good-manners, including, at least, the respect due to age and sex. These opinions I was stating at some

length to my friend, Mr. Bullion, late of Lombard Street, while staying at his pleasant country-house in Somersetshire, and, very much to my surprise, he endorsed them with great readiness. I thought that, having been a banker himself, and from what I knew of him besides, he would defend his cloth *à l'outrance*; but far from doing so, he favoured me with a personal experience of his own in confirmation of what I had been saying.

'It is very true,' said he, 'that a stranger often meets with great rudeness in City banks. The clerks are too apt to imagine that everybody is by profession a man of business who happens to have any dealings with them; they will let him stand for half an hour without telling him which desk to apply to; and, even when addressed, they will scarcely vouchsafe him an answer. But the clerks in other banking establishments are quite polished gentlemen compared with some with whom I have myself had dealings in the Bank of England. No worrying by stupid people can excuse such contemptuous indifference for the difficulties of others, or snappish replies to genuine enquiries as I have witnessed there. But worst of all is conduct of this kind when the bank-clerk does not even possess the trumpery knowledge which begets his impertinence. The other day, I went up to town to get my dividends. The clerk at whose desk I made my application tendered me the proper document as usual, but added, as he did so: "Well, is this all you want?"

"Yes; thank you," said I; for I have been always a civil-spoken person, I hope, whether as clerk or partner.

"Much *you* know about your own affairs," rejoined the official gruffly. "You've got last year's dividends to draw."

"No," said I, "you are mistaken there."

"*Am I?*" returned he, contemptuously. "And there's the year before that too, you wiseacre. What is the good of a fellow like you pretending to do business!"

'He tossed me over the other papers, and I filled them up as usual. I was perfectly well aware that the man was wrong; but the combination of insolence and ignorance in him tickled my fancy.

"Well," said I humbly, "I suppose these are all that I am to have, at all events?"

"Well, then, you suppose wrong," sneered the dividend-clerk. "Go over to that gentleman at yonder desk, and tell him what has happened here, and ask him whether he has got anything for you. Why, you're a mere baby."

'I thought to myself: "If you were in the house of Bullion & Co., my young friend, I'd read you a lesson about politeness to your master's customers, that you wouldn't forget in a hurry;" but I did as I was told without reply.

'The dividend-clerk to whom I was referred regarded me as though I had been a black beetle. "What's the use of people of your sort coming to a place like this?" asked he. "You're from the country, I suppose?—Ah, I thought so. Why don't you get a lawyer to do your business for you, and not take up our time in this ridiculous manner? Why, you've got five years' dividends to receive; you know no more about your own property than an Ojibbeway."

"I don't think I have any back-dividends to receive at all," said I; "but when I get home, I'll look at my banker's book."

"Banker's book!" repeated the official sardonically; "you should buy a horn-book first, and study your A B C."

'To make a long story short, I went back to my hotel with a great deal of money thrust upon me by these good gentlemen of the Bank of England, to which I had no more right than you have; and having referred to my banker's book, just for form's sake, although I was quite sure of the fact, I wrote to one of the principal officials in Threadneedle Street to let him know what had happened.

'Conceive my indignation, Sir, at receiving a reply couched in the most insolent terms, and directing me to repair to the Bank at a certain hour the next day to refund those moneys "of which I had improperly possessed myself."

'I don't think that I was ever made so angry before in

all my life. I wrote back a reply which I flatter myself the principal official was not in the habit of receiving. I let him know who I was, and I also favoured him with my opinion of the manner in which business matters were conducted at his little establishment. I concluded by stating that, so far from repairing to the Bank myself, I should require any person concerned in rectifying the stupid mistake of his subordinates to be at my hotel the succeeding day between the hours of one and two, when I should be at lunch : but at no other time would I receive them.

‘Accordingly, the two bank-clerks, with a cab full of dividend-books, came to see me lunch, and hear my lecture upon politeness and accuracy ; and I hope it did them good.’

These remarks of Mr. Bullion were made some years ago ; but partly from the fact that his observations are always delivered with great *aplomb*, as though he were dropping gold, and partly from the unusual circumstance that we happened to agree with one another upon the matter in question, I had not forgotten the particulars of the adventure above described, when I met my friend the other day in the Poultry.

‘Well, my dear Sir,’ said I, ‘I trust that the Bank of England has been putting no slight upon you lately.’

‘I have not given them the opportunity, Sir, since that dividend-day,’ returned Mr. Bullion, purpling with indignation at the mere reminiscence ; ‘but I dare say they are as ignorant of their business as ever. Well ; we’re close by the place ; let us try.’

‘Try what?’ asked I aghast. ‘You have got no dividends to draw.’

‘No, but I’ve got a five-pound note to get changed.’ Mr. Bullion pulled out a roll of them that made my mouth water as a hungry man’s might at another sort of roll. ‘I dare say they’ll make some stupid objection. Come along.’ I could not surmise what was about to happen ; but I confess I was greatly gratified at being associated with the great Bullion upon such an enterprise ; just as one might feel honoured in being appointed second (or

still more, to hold the stakes) in an encounter between my Lord Overstone and Baron Rothschild.

We entered the great temple of mammon, and Mr. Bullion tendered his five-pound note at the mahogany altar.

The officiating flamen gave it one searching scrutiny, and shovelled out the five sovereigns upon the counter.

'I suppose that note is a good one,' observed Mr. Bullion quietly.

With a swift sweep of his practised fingers, the clerk regained possession of the gold, and regarded us with mingled aversion and dismay.

'What do you mean?' said he, re-examining the note, and this time with elaborate care.

'I suppose it *is* a good one,' repeated Mr. Bullion.

'Well, I don't see anything the matter with it; but you must put your name on the back.'

'O no dear,' returned my friend decisively; 'I should not think of doing that. Why, how do you know I can write?'

'Ah, you can write well enough,' said the clerk impatiently. 'Come, none of your tricks. If you don't put your name upon it, you shall not have your change.'

'My name *is* upon it,' returned Mr. Bullion gravely.

'I don't see it,' replied the clerk, holding the note up to the light. 'I can see nothing on the back at all.'

'It's on the front, my good friend: *Or Bearer*. My name's Bearer, so far as you are concerned. I shall write nothing else upon that note.'

'Then you won't get your change,' rejoined the official.

'Very good, my friend,' returned Mr. Bullion, taking out his huge gold watch, and placing it upon the counter. 'I give you ten minutes to make up your mind upon that point. If I do not receive my money by sixteen minutes after two precisely, I bring my action against your employers the Governor and Company of the Bank of England. They will have to show cause why they shall not be declared bankrupts. I again tender you this note, issued by them. Do you intend to refuse payment?'

The spectacle of determination and impassivity afforded

by Mr. Bullion might have moved firmer minds than that of the unfortunate bank-clerk. He murmured something about consulting the head of his department, and disappeared within the interior of the building. We remained the centre of an admiring commercial crowd, the majority of whom, I believe, imagined us to be a couple of audacious swindlers. At eleven minutes after two, Mr. Bullion addressed a neighbouring clerk in a sonorous voice :

‘You had better inform your fellow-clerk, young man, that half the time of grace allowed by me to his employers, the Governor and Company of the Bank of England, has now elapsed. In five minutes it will be too late for them to meet this their just engagement.’

At these awful words, the second clerk dived into the same back premises to which the first had already betaken himself. At 2.15, to a second, the latter returned, with the note in his hand, and very red in the face. He shovelled out the five sovereigns with rather unnecessary vehemence, but without one word of comment.

‘Thank you,’ said Mr. Bullion courteously. ‘I thought you would not require my signature. If ever I publish a book about the duties and behaviour of bank-clerks, dedicated to the proprietors of this respectable establishment, I’ll send you a presentation copy.’





DOWN-STREAM.

IT is late autumn, and all London is out of town save myself. I am detained in that hateful brick-kiln, while my friends and acquaintances are upon the breezy moors, or climbing snowy mountain-tops, or lying listless by the calm cool seas. I shall have no autumn holiday this year ; nothing remains for me but iced beverages, and the memory of vanished pleasure-trips. Let me recall one of these latter, and set it down ; for while I do so, a panorama of exquisite landscape pictures passes through my brain, and, for the time, obscures the desolate dusty road, the white and blinding street. My mind, thank Heaven, is stored with many such recollections. Which of them shall I summon up to comfort me ? Already I feel myself a willing captive, taken in a net of sunny thoughts. I draw at random from the rainbow skein.

It is a record of last spring-time, a gossamer-memory, with the dew and sunray on it still.

In the early summer, not when 'the spring is setting in with its usual severity,' but a little later, when the streets are filled with light white-awned carts, full of blooming flowers, and when women bearing baskets of charming posies, make sweet the London air ; then it is, even more than in the autumn (I say it even now), that

one longs to flee from bricks and mortar into the country. Moreover (which is surely a charm), one should not do it. Business demands one's presence in the metropolis; there is no legitimate vacation at that period for people of our quality. Hence it is the very time for a holiday. Nor can we properly enjoy it alone. I don't say that one should take one's wife and family; far from it; they will go to the sea-side, doubtless, in due time; but the epoch of which we speak is essentially masculine and (if I may say so) bachelory. It is necessary to take three friends (all of whom are also doing wrong in leaving their business at such a season), for, notwithstanding the lavish promises of the barometer, it may be wet; and the country under rain, and without the raw material of a rubber at whist, is well known to be unbearable. Also these friends must be judiciously chosen: a morose man, a stingy man, a fool, or one incapable of laughter, would shipwreck the whole clandestine scheme. Many a man who is a very decent companion at the club in Pall Mall, would be hateful in a village inn. Finally, let everybody have to be back in town again by a certain day and hour, upon business of the most serious importance, and let nobody get back when he intended, and let that business be postponed. A certain recklessness of consequences is indispensable.

Upon the occasion I have in my mind, we were four chosen souls. Each, if not at the very summit of his profession, deserved to be there, and may be designated as if he was. There was the Merchant Prince, a man truly gorgeous in his ideas, and magnificent in the execution of them; there was the Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, who audited our accounts, and exhorted us to stand upon our rights whenever men oppressed us; there was Professor Beeswing (of the Entomological Society), with the most varied information, perhaps, that ever existed in a single human storehouse; and there was the Deathless Author, a gentleman whose powers of fiction are by no means confined to the construction of books. It was this last individual who had organised

the expedition, and settled its destination — Willow Bridge, beautifully situate upon the river Thames, and not a thousand miles from Marlow. 'We will fish for gudgeon—creatures that you catch in myraids as you sit in an arm-chair in your punt. Then we will drop down to Cliefden Spring, and stroll in those glorious woods. I know every inch of the river. It will be divine.'

Something like this he said to all, but exhibiting some especial bait to each. To the M. P. he spoke of the cookery of river-fish, which he portrayed as unique and perfect; to the L. C. B. he held out a solemn promise that we should be warned off a certain island, which the public had nevertheless an indefeasible right to land upon and occupy; while to the Professor he painted a particular species of butterfly to be found in the vicinity of Marlow only, in the lively colours of his own imagination. Thus it was that he seduced the party to Willow Bridge, where they put up at the *Swan-on-horseback*, 'famous inn.' In an hour or so, we had left London behind us at an infinite distance, with all its wicked works. It was a holiday in itself to mark the landlord 'seeing what he could do' in the way of sleeping-apartments and a private sitting-room; to hear the landlady express her opinion that 'it might be done;' to behold the waiter unconcerned in these arrangements, taking the air at the front-door, and shading his eyes from the fiery sun with a napkin; to watch the people leaning over the bridge, with their heads close together, and chewing straws or pieces of stick, which presently they dropped into the fleeting stream, and set to work anew. Nobody was in a Cheapside hurry; nobody was possessed by the devil of Competition to tout for custom. When the Deathless Author led us down to the river-side, and bid us choose our fishing-punt, we were not torn to pieces by the skinny fingers of opposition Ancient Mariners.

'Did you want to go on the water, gentlemen?' enquired a comfortable boatman, lazily removing his pipe from his mouth with one hand, and scratching his head with the other.

'Certainly, my good man,' replied the D. A. cheer-

fully: 'we are come to fish for gudgeon. Big punt—arm-chairs—lots of luncheon—worms and ground-bait—floats and rods. Come, look alive!'

But the mariner only shook his head.

'There aint no ground-fishing yet awhile, bless ye. You may get a trout, mayhap; but it's like to be a long business. How many days are you going to stay?'

'Oh, this is so like the Deathless Author,' cried the Merchant Prince with a scornful smile. 'I wonder there's a river here, for my part.'

'My dear Sir—my very dear Sir,' cried the D. A., 'there must be some frightful mistake. Now, leave this man to me.—Do you really mean to say that we can't go gudgeon-fishing?'

'Why, in course you can't. It's a fenced month.'

'A what? a what?' exclaimed the L. C. B., speaking very fast. 'That's a very nice question; I should be inclined to dispute that fact. Now, here is my name and address, my worthy man. O yes, we'll try this question. What do *you* say, Beeswing?'

'Hush! be quiet; don't move—don't stir,' returned the Professor earnestly. 'You've got the most splendid specimen of the stinging dragon-fly on the nape of your neck. Only wait till I get my net.'

'The river is charming,' remarked the Deathless Author, with galvanic enthusiasm—'perfectly charming. It would have been almost too hot for fishing; let us row to Cliefden Spring. It is the most beautiful stream-scenery in the world, and the duchess permits everybody to enjoy it. I am quite sure that will please you. Yes, let us row up there. "You call it 'up' to Cliefden, don't you, my man?"'

'Well, Sir, it's *down-stream*, any way,' replied the mariner, regarding the D. A. as if he were little better than a born idiot.

'And this is the man who has brought us to Willow Bridge, under pretence of knowing the country!' ejaculated the M. P. 'He pretends to have been born in the district. He assured me only last night that the *Swan-o n-horsback* made up a hundred beds.'

‘Never mind,’ said the Professor good-naturedly ; ‘let us forgive him. There are beds enough, and the genus *Cimicidæ* is doubtless unknown to them.’

‘I am appeased,’ quoth the Merchant Prince sententiously. ‘Let us take boat, and be off.’ And there being no gilded barge in waiting manned with slaves in crimson, pulling silver oars, or other vessel suitable to his quality, we stepped into a painted pleasure-boat and set off for Cliefden Spring.

I do not describe that voyage, since the same water was afterwards rowed over by the same goodly company ; enough to say that it was charming as a siren’s song ; the Lord Chief Baron’s brow grew smoother with every dip of oar ; Professor Beeswing sat with half-closed eyes watching the insect creatures skimming the stream, like a happy cat dreaming of *entrées* of fish and mice. The Merchant Prince was pleased to acknowledge the attention that was shown him by the setting sun, and to express his satisfaction with the general arrangements of nature for his reception on the river. The Deathless Author kept a divine silence, partly because he wished the scene to sink into the soul of his companions, whose indignation still might smoulder, and partly because speech was frozen within him, with the apprehension of that very misfortune which subsequently occurred.

When they came in sight of Cliefden’s hanging woods, a murmur of admiration broke from two of those who had not seen that leafy paradise before. ‘We forgive you—we thank you—we applaud you,’ exclaimed they with a single voice, and grateful looks towards him who had organised the expedition. ‘How charming it will be to plunge into the green coolness of those woods.’

The Merchant Prince, without letting himself down to vulgar jubilation, regarded the white palace glinting from the full-foliaged hill above us, as though he would like to buy it.

‘Can one go up to the house, and see the place?’ enquired he of one of the boatmen.

‘No, Sir ; nor *land at all*, if the duchess is at Cliefden.’

‘What!’ cried the three strangers, turning like one

man—and not a good-tempered one either—upon the Deathless Author. ‘Can this be true?’

The unhappy fictionist smiled in a ghastly manner, and gave them to understand that the boatman was a well-meaning dullard, whom it would be idle to cross-examine. ‘*And besides,*’ added he, ‘the duchess is sure not to be there.’

‘I don’t like that,’ observed the M. P. sharply, who though so wealthy, was not deficient in intelligence.

The Lord Chief Baron cast a withering glance upon the deceiver, as upon some prevaricating witness, whom he should like to turn inside out by cunning questions.

The Professor regarded him with that calm contempt which he bestows upon mayflies, and the less common *Neuroptera*, of which he has already specimens in his collection.

The Deathless Author offered not a syllable in defence. He already perceived an official person of forbidding exterior standing at the head of the landing-stairs. He knew what he was put there to say.

‘Nobody can come ashore to-day, gentlemen; the duchess is at Cliefden.’

‘I suppose it *is* her private property,’ observed the L. C. B. reflectively; ‘one couldn’t prove right of way.’

At this audacious observation the ancestral retainer glared at us as at a ship-load of blasphemers and river-pirates, and waved us off with a majestic motion of his hand.

The boatmen grinned in their sleeves, or would have done so if they had not been bare-armed, and turned the head of our little craft towards Willow Bridge.

In half an hour or so—such is the blessed influence of stream-scenery—all disappointment had faded from the memory, and even confidence in the Deathless Author was almost restored.

Of our stay at that admirable river-inn I shall say nothing. The chief charm of life in such a place is that nothing happens worthy of being recorded. To eat, to drink, to sleep, to saunter on the sloping lawn, and smoke the dream-compelling weed; to lie at length with-

in the rocking skiff, and hear the whisper of the river-nymphs, and feel their cool breath through the tender plank ; to bask beneath the willow, lulled to sleep by the thunder of the roaring weir — these things, distinct enough in the clear depths of memory, have not a substance that the pen can picture. Man, being made for action and material matters, tires in time of all such pleasant shadows. There was a bridegroom staying at Willow Bridge, who, it was plain, for his part, had had more than enough of them. How he did gape, and yawn, and sigh for very weariness ! The obsequious manner in which he strove to make himself agreeable to us, and thereby win conversation and relief from inexpressible *tedium vitæ*, was touching to behold. But four is company and five is none, so we cast the poor wretch from us. We froze him with our icy speech as he strove to climb into our pleasure-galley out of the ocean of *ennui* ; we jested among each other at his drowning agonies, and threw champagne bottles, as it were, at his head as he went down. We chopped his fingers, figuratively speaking, with sharp epigrams, and so made him loose his hold. He must have looked upon us like a second crew of the *Flowery Land*.

The L. C. B., who is a determined bachelor, remorselessly bade him cleave to his lawful wife. Indeed, we had no sort of pity for him. *We* had not been shut up for three weeks at Willow Bridge with a feeble young female, who objected to smoking. *We* did not hear a still small voice—but getting perceptibly louder—crying : ‘ *Charles, love, the tea has been brought up !* THE TEA IS READY, CHARLES, DEAREST ! THE TEA IS GETTING COLD, CHARLES !’

At which last sentence, or *ultimatum*, Charles surrendered at discretion, and went in wearily through the French window. No, for our part, we welcomed such lotus-eating (which included two courses of excellent fresh-water fish) very gladly, and were truly grieved when the time came for us to part. When it became absolutely essential that the M. P. should preside at the meeting of the Golconda Mine Company ; when it was a *sine quâ*

non that the L. C. B. should state his views upon a matter of trespass before a high legal tribunal ; when the Professor must needs read his exhaustive paper upon the emanations of the *Silphidæ* before the Society for the Encouragement of Insect Knowledge ; when the Deathless Author, whose word was his bond—and quite equal in pecuniary value—had solemnly promised to personally superintend the production of one of his own volumes in Paternoster Row ; it was on that very morning, I say, when Duty, with her customary scowl, was bidding us resume hateful toil within city walls, and leave the rare spring sunshine, and the gleaming river, and the emerald fields, that the Merchant Prince astonished the company, as the fatal railway omnibus drove to the door, by observing with audacious calmness : ‘I have a great idea, my friends ; we won’t go by the train at all.’

‘Our luggage is packed,’ sighed the Professor, pointing mournfully to his large tin butterfly case and little carpet-bag awaiting removal in the passage.

‘Let the luggage go, then,’ returned the M. P. authoritatively. ‘But as for us, let us drop down the river to London.’

So immeasurably distant did Willow Bridge, and especially its winding river, appear to us to be from the great Babylon, that this suggestion struck us all aghast.

‘Drop down the river !’ repeated the L. C. B. doubtfully, and as though he saw several flaws in the proposition already. ‘Down to Windsor, you mean.’

‘Down to London Bridge!’ quoth the M. P. resolutely. ‘Land short of that—say at Blackfriars—and the whole scheme would be a failure.’

The Deathless Author already perceived himself in a frail skiff, amid the whirling eddies of Westminster, rocked by express steamers, and coming to grief against the piers of bridges. His countenance was unmistakably negative.

The Professor murmured that it was impossible to observe the *Phryganææ* beyond Hammersmith.

‘Very good,’ observed the Merchant Prince, with the

air of a man who has given up a point to oblige his fellow-creatures. 'Let us say Hampton Court. We shall then have only fifty miles or so to row.'

'Row!' exclaimed the L. C. B. 'I would not row ten miles for —'

'My friends,' interrupted the Merchant Prince majestically, 'the matter is in my hands. When I say "we shall row," I mean it in the same sense as "we shall sail." No physical exertion will be necessary. I engage a crew of two. We take turns in the arduous duties of steering. I invite you to dine with me at Hampton Court.'

In half an hour, we were dropping down the river, in the good skiff *Cygnets*, between the level meadows down to Camelot—no, to Cookham. The boat was green and gold, the cushions scarlet, and the even dip of the four oars had a silver sound. All else was silent, save for the hiss of the angry swan, as we came too near her throne among the osiers, or infringed upon her royal progress through the river; and save for the monotone of the cuckoo in the far-distant woods. Only, ever and anon, our stroke would rest upon his oars, and raise his voice in a wild melody of 'Lok, Lok, Lok,' and the locksmith would come forth from his cottage, and open wide the barriers of the flood, and shut us in. Then slowly sank the boat, and the water with it, till the trim bright garden sloping to the brink could be seen no more, and the black gates loomed larger and larger momentarily, and the dark sides of our water-prison deepened. Then, upon ransom being counted out, sometimes into a little cup at the end of a pole, with which, for convenience of payment, our warder favoured us—as a child feeds Bruins in a bear-pit—he let the sunlight once more in upon us, and set us on the broad and shining river-road. I am afraid to say how many of these aquatic turnpikes we passed through, but we never tired of them, though each was as like to each as are sweet-pease. We concocted out of them a sensation novel for the Deathless Author, entitled the *Lock-keeper's Daughter*, of which, since he was not grateful for it, I am almost induced to publish the plot.

Suffice it to say, however, that our heroine fled from her amphibious home in evil hour, and returned only to perish there by her own act : when her father opened the gates to the first-comer in the summer morning, her golden hair was mingled with the weeds that clung to them ; and ever afterwards there was a ghastly cry of ' Lok, Lok, Lok ' oft heard at night. If the plot of this lock story should be too involved, suggested (the L. C. B. (whose nature is cynical), Chubb (of which there was plenty in the neighbourhood) would doubtless supply it with a key.

We composed the most thrilling parts of this original narrative in the various boat-houses into which we were driven by the passing spring showers ; and a general curdling of the blood, known to novel-readers as ' creepiness ' (a little assisted, perhaps, by the change of temperature), was inwardly experienced on such occasions. The steering into these havens of refuge was by no means an easy matter ; the entrances were always narrow, though they afforded a wide field for discussion as to how they should be approached ; and oftentimes the passengers of the *Cygnets* found themselves, along with their unskilful coxswain, exposed to the whole fury of the elements while the rowers, in the more favoured half of the boat, were under cover. Everybody thinks that he can poke a fire and steer a boat. I dare not record how many times we grounded on the golden shallows under the haughty guidance of the Merchant Prince ; how often we stuck upon sandbacks, over which the L. C. B. insisted upon trying his favourite question of right of way ; how oftended the spectacled Professor, bent on dragonflies, took us slap into the osiers. Once the Deathless Author (besides minor errors), seeking to win renown by taking the boat through a narrow arch without unshipping, came full butt against the buttress, and nearly brought both voyage and voyagers to their end. There were lively discussions upon our individual merits as navigators ; ingenious theories as to why swans tip themselves topsy-turvy, and remain with the other end of them (if I may say so) growing perpendicularly out of

the water like a white cabbage; and learned explanations from the Professor of the phenomenon of the legs of the cattle upon the bank being only reflected in the stream *half-way*, and of what became of the other half.

The cattle, whether they so stood in the cool meadow-grass or descended to the cooler wave, were always a charming sight, as likewise were the swans, whichever end was uppermost. From stately Windsor, crowned with its royal abode, down to the smallest hamlet, every dwelling-place of man looked bright and beauteous. A hundred gray church towers greeted us through stately trees; a thousand villas smiled upon us from their flowery gardens.

‘Nice,’ said the Merchant Prince, with semi-approval, ‘from June to August; from August to June, nice also, doubtless, for frogs, toads, newts, and water-rats.’

But the M. P. had been put out of bliss by some cow-beef, of which we had imprudently partaken at a river-inn, and also made a little despondent by certain memoranda in a literary work—*The Oarsman’s Companion*, I think it was called—found in the pocket of our stroke. Nobody, it said, should ever step into a pleasure-boat without knowing how to behave towards the apparently drowned.

Avoid all rough usage, was the first canon.

‘Why, what a set of ruffians aquatic folks must be,’ exclaimed the M. P., ‘to need such an admonition! Would these boatmen proceed to kick us, if we fell overboard?’

Never hold the body up by the feet!

‘Did you ever hear of anything so barbarous?’

Nor roll the body on casks!

‘Really, this is too horrible! Casks!’

Nor rub the body with salt or spirits!

‘These men must be cannibals, my friends.’

Nor inject tobacco-smoke or its infusion into the nostrils.

‘I don’t like this,’ quoth the Merchant Prince, closing the horrid little volume, and wiping his brow with his pocket-handkerchief; ‘let us get out and walk.’

‘Ay, let us walk,’ cried the L. C. B., who is a member

of the Alpine Club ; “ we have had enough of sitting and of steering, we.”

‘ We have had more than enough of *your* steering,’ replied the Deathless Author viciously ; ‘ but let me beg that there may be no pedestrianism. Walking means no pleasant talking, no leisure, no laughter ; it means perspiration, dust, and the malignant joy of seeing others more tired than ourselves.’

But the words of the wise were disregarded. It was arranged that the boat should go on to Hampton in advance of us, while we disembarked, and made our way thither by the dusty roads. Those whom the gods wish to ruin, they first cause to take to pedestrianism. Before he left the galley, however, the M. P. had a lucid interval. ‘ Let us write down,’ said he, ‘ our orders for dinner, so that our boatmen may leave them with the landlord, and we may find the banquet prepared on our arrival. Which is the best inn ? ’

‘ *The Toy, the Toy,*’ returned the Deathless Author gloomily, averse to leave the silvery stream, the frequent splash of happy bathers, the scarlet cushions, and the motion without toil.

‘ To the landlord of *the Toy*, then, greeting : *Whitebait indispensable,*’ quoth the Merchant Prince, holding a turquoise pencil in his jewelled fingers—‘ *asparagus unlimited ; Moselle-cup iced.* Let us leave the rest of the repast to his own genius ! ’

I forbear to speak of that walk to Hampton along the hot white roads ; after the first ten minutes, all sank into the usual sulky silence. The L. C. B. alone, knowing what his legs could do, smiled grimly. All of a sudden, as we drew near our bourne, after hours of painful exertion, we beheld vast crowds of people coming forth to meet us.

The Deathless Author, well convinced that all would be laid to him in the way of misadventure, hung back a little, and addressed his silent friends, all walking for their lives.

‘ Look here,’ said he ; ‘ you’ll say it’s me, of course ; but I never advised your coming to dine at Hampton Court on a *Whit-Monday.*’

At these hideous words, the three stopped suddenly, and gazed reproachfully at the speaker.

‘So like him,’ said the M. P., pointing with a scornful finger—‘so very, very like him!’

‘There will be nothing to eat at all,’ groaned the L. C. B.

‘Little or nothing,’ sighed the Professor, looking into his case of entomological specimens, as into a larder.

We trudged on in dust and gloom. There were forty thousand persons under the chestnuts in Bushy Park. There would be a good many more in the inns. Still, man is prone to hope. We enquired at the first house we came to, which was the way to *the Toy*.

‘*The Toy*,’ was the reply, ‘does not exist: it has been turned these three years into a row of private houses.’

All groaned.

‘So very, very like him,’ quoth the Merchant Prince, with majestic pity. ‘Here is a fly—jump in. To the *Star and Garter*, Richmond.’

‘But the boatmen!’ murmured the L. C. B.—‘we are clearly liable.’

‘They have my name and address,’ responded the M. P. loftily. ‘I am as fixed to go to Richmond as was ever General Grant.’

So, in the glorious eventide, it happened that, sitting after a royal banquet over goodly wine, we once more saw the winding river which had borne us so far and well upon its quiet bosom, smelt once more the cool, soft river-airs, made odorous on their way by lilac flower and chestnut bloom, and all the sweetness of the land in spring. Then, pledging each the other, did we vow we never should forget that glorious holiday, but, marked with white in our life’s kalends, would keep it sweet and fair within our memory for evermore.



THE PLANTAGENET AND THE TRAVELLERS' JOY.

THE *Plantagenet*, above referred to, is a hotel of some pretension on the eastern seaboard of this favoured land. The *Travellers' Joy* is not a flower (nor anything like it) but a village inn, in the same locality, only more inland. It is my settled purpose, for the benefit of such of my fellow-countrymen as may be foolishly thinking of going out of town this summer, for the sake of sea or country air, to describe both these places.

Spring had put in that first deceptive appearance of hers, which she so frequently uses at the close of the winter weather; just as some base undergraduate at a voluntary theological lecture will leave his card in the professor's hand, and then slink out behind his back, she had shown her face, and we fondly thought she was about to stay; we did not suspect that old scoundrel Winter to be still lingering in the lap of May; and finding London hot, five town-bred gentlemen, including the present writer, resolved to go away.

One of these, Faintheart, a foreigner, opined that we should go to Paris, for that no other place on the earth's surface was in reality worth visiting.

Another whom I will call Mécænas, because (Heaven bless him!) he is a patron of literature, proposed that we should repair to Menue, a certain manufacturing town (we understood) in the south of France, where, exactly

eighteen years and two months ago, he had had the very best dinner he had ever eaten in his life.

Brighteyes, a barrister, protested with cheerful alacrity that he would come into any gentleman's plan which did not necessitate crossing the Channel; but that since the nature of his constitution demanded a fortnight's complete repose after a sea-passage, and our whole holiday was not to exceed that period, the court (if we would allow him to call us so) must perceive that a home-journey was indispensable.

As I don't think I can speak French (or at least have never attempted to do so), I was equally opposed (though I did not think it necessary to give the reason) to foreign travel.

Then Slyboots, the savant—whom nobody has ever yet fathomed, no not even so far as to know where he lives—came in, as usual, with his casting-vote, and settled everything in his own way.

'Let us go to Shinglebeach,' said he.

'I don't like the name,' said Faintheart suspiciously.

'I don't like the place,' thought I to myself, for I remembered to have heard of suicide at Shinglebeach being rather a popular amusement in the summer months; but I held my tongue.

'Why Shinglebeach?' enquired Brighteyes in his swift cross-examining manner.

'It is a most attractive spot,' answered Slyboots gravely. 'The marks of ancient sea-margins are to be clearly traced miles inland. The most interesting ruin in Great Britain, the one most associated (if I except the Tower) with the history of our native land, is within walking-distance. Upon the downs in the neighbourhood, beetles of the rarest kind——'

'But the hotel?' interposed Mecænas rudely. 'What food is to be got beside your beetles? That is the point; I may say the only point about which it is necessary to be certain. Now, at Menue——'

'Stop, stop!' interrupted Brighteyes hastily; 'don't let us embarrass ourselves with Menue. You shall go there, my dear Mecænas, by *yourself*, when this little

expedition is over.—But now Slyboots, upon your solemn oath' [the savant turned deadly pale], 'I mean upon your honour' [the savant's colour returned; deception was familiar to him, perjury was out of his line], 'can you honestly recommend the hotel at this place, for you know we like our little comforts?'

'My good friends,' cried Slyboots, with an engaging frankness that has concealed his ways throughout life far better than any vulgar evasion could possibly have done, 'am I the man to deceive you? I have, it is true, never myself been to Shinglebeach, but I have always heard it spoken of as one of the most interesting of localities; the *Plantagenet*—— But you must surely have heard of the *Plantagenet Hotel*?'

I nodded, not because I *had* ever heard of it, but because Slyboots looked at me in his pleasant and persuasive manner.

'*He* knows it,' observed the savant triumphantly. 'Everybody does know it who knows anything about cookery.' [Mecænas, who prides himself even more upon the accuracy of his palate than that of his literary taste, winced at this.] 'If you are fond of kickshaws, the *Plantagenet* is the very place for you. As for Faint-heart, he will imagine himself once again in his native land.'

Faintheart shuddered; the subject was painful to him; his beloved country had been recently absorbed by the Prussian Eagle.

'As for you, Brighteyes, who are fond of walking——'

'One can walk *everywhere*,' observed that gentleman incisively.

'And as for *you*, my dear fellow,' continued the savant, turning his attentions from the uncompromising Brighteyes to myself, 'why, you know the *Plantagenet* already, as you know everything else, and I need not tell you how excellent is the accommodation it affords.'

It was weak of me to be silent, I am aware: if I had guessed the seriousness of the charge that I was subsequently to incur, I should have spoken, of course. But Slyboots is really so pleasant—and a compliment from

one of his intelligence is so well worth having—in short, I am afraid I not only nodded, but nodded an affirmative.

Shinglebeach is a hideous clump of houses upon a shore of rubble-stones. A long terrace of forbidding mansions, called the Esplanade—the outsides of which seem to be undergoing an operation analogous to moulting in birds, or the mange in dogs—is considered to be its most desirable locality, and each house is said to let during the summer months at from twenty to twenty-five guineas a week. There is not a tree to be seen, even by the aid of a Dolland's telescope, in any direction whatever, and in August I should fancy it would be hot. George III. once honoured Shinglebeach with his presence (probably during an aggravated attack of lunacy,) and the site of the residence he occupied on that occasion is still called Royal Terrace, and is charged for to tenants accordingly. George IV. also visited the place, in search of what peculiar pleasure it is impossible to guess; I incline to the belief indeed that Beau Brummell brought him down there as a practical joke, for we read that the friendship of those two worthies was abruptly terminated about that identical time. He stopped at the *Plantagenet* throughout his sojourn, which extended to fourteen hours, but contrary to his custom, left no memento of his visit in the shape of a new dish—at least we found nothing there in the culinary way of so late an epoch. No one would have guessed that a king had ever crossed the threshold, except for the majestic coolness of the landlord—and his prices.

Never shall I forget our first dinner in that delusive establishment, which, at the request of the party, I had ordered to be served in the *Plantagenet's* best manner, and for which I was, most unjustly, held responsible. Still less shall I forget the wines.

'Is this *soup*?' asked Mecænas during the first course, and with the air of a man really asking for information. 'Because, if so, soup is new to me: I have never tasted

' said Slyboots, looking at me good-

humouredly, 'your soup is not quite up to the mark; but I dare say you will redeem yourself in the fish.'

'*My* soup! and redeem myself in the fish!' cried I scornfully. 'Well, that's a good one.'

'Well, let us hope it will be a good one,' observed Brighteyes, with his habitual cheerfulness. 'Let us trust it will be red mullet.'

'No. *I* know what it will be,' said Faintheart gloomily. 'It will be soles. They will have come down with us in the train from London. I know these British inns *so* well. Afterwards will appear something squashed and half cold, which, because it is handed round, they will call an *entrée*. Then there will be a leg of mutton: tough, oh, so tough! Then rhubarb-tart—always rhubarb tart; and a cheese which I don't mean to touch. Now, if we had gone to Paris——'

'Or, still better, to Menue,' put in Mecænas.

'Some of us would have been green and white by this time, and could have eaten nothing,' added Brighteyes, hastily; 'as it is, I have a magnificent appetite. Why the deuce don't that waiter come?'

'It is impossible to say,' observed Slyboots. 'I don't think he is responsible for his actions. I have tried to catch his eye once or twice, and he evades me in a very peculiar manner. Have you remarked, too, that he never speaks?'

We all agreed that there was something far from right about that waiter.

'Goodness gracious!' ejaculated Mecænas, passing a costly pocket-handkerchief across his ample brow; 'I wish he wouldn't stand behind my chair.'

'There is nothing to fear,' returned the savant calmly. 'I have studied the subject of homicidal impulse. A nervous manner; a disinclination to catch the human eye; an aversion to speech; profuse perspiration when addressed: these are all signs of suicidal mania. He will probably pitch himself out of window, when we are least expecting it.'

'Exit with the *entrée*,' observed Brighteyes epigrammatically. 'Hush! he comes.'

There was really something very remarkable about that waiter. He had a good-looking, though feeble face, but with an air of mixed abstraction and embarrassment that was most extraordinary; and he had never spoken a single word.

'What fish is it?' enquired Mecænas peevishly (he is a little impatient with respect to his food), before the cover had been removed.

'Fish me no fishes,' was the astounding reply of the waiter.

'This is most curious, most interesting,' murmured Slyboots (who was on the further side of the table). 'If we can only draw him out.—Waiter, are there any pleasant drives in this neighbourhood?'

The waiter showed his teeth good-humouredly, but emphatically shook his head.

'No drives, eh? Well, I suppose there are some walks at all events?'

But again the waiter showed his teeth, and shook his head more emphatically even than before.

'No walks, eh?' continued the imperturbable Slyboots. 'And I dare say there are no pleasure-boats to be hired for sailing on the sea?'

'Certainly not,' answered our mysterious attendant, as plainly as head and teeth could speak.

'Then please to bring the fish-sauce,' said Slyboots. Whereupon, repeating what sounded like 'Fish-horse,' in a mechanical manner, the unfortunate creature left the room.

We were looking at one another in solemn silence, not unmixed with alarm, when Faintheart, with an effort, thus expressed himself: 'There's nothing the matter with the poor fellow at all; he's a stupid British waiter, just as they all are. He had absolutely forgotten what he calls the fish-horse.'

'Stop a bit,' cried Brighteyes; 'I am not so sure.—Lift up that cover, Mecænas. I believe there is no fish beneath it. There; it's mutton! The fact is we are being waited upon by a gentleman from the continent. All foreigners have not your intelligence, my dear Faintheart—that's all.'

Brighteyes was right. This unfortunate waiter had been imported, like a coolie, to labour during the coming season at the *Plantagenet*. He had only arrived there the day before, and of course knew no more about Shinglebeach than we did. Being totally unacquainted with the British language, he naturally objected to be drawn into conversation, and shook his head with determination when addressed.

Faintheart, who is a polyglottist of the first-water, tried him with every modern tongue without effect : at last he gathered, from some chance expression, that this poor fellow's country had, like his own, been recently absorbed by the Prussian Eagle ; and from that time they were allies. Faintheart thenceforward always spoke to him more in sorrow than in anger, whereas we used the contrary style. Since it comforted us and could not hurt his feelings, we applied to him every depreciatory epithet of which propriety admitted.

Next to that waiter at the *Plantagenet*, the most unsatisfactory things were what he brought. The courses were composed of precisely what Faintheart had predicted, except that we once had fish *à l'Indienne*—soles upon which the cook had emptied the remains of a pickle-jar.

It was a grand sight to behold Macænas enquiring with forced calmness for some (to him) necessity of the table.

‘Waiter, I do not see the asparagus !’

‘A-sparrow-gus,’ reiterated the unhappy alien, checking off the syllables upon his fingers (his proprietor absolved him, doubtless from respect to his outraged nationality, from wearing Berlin gloves,)—‘a-sparrow-gus ;’ and down he fled to the kitchen with that cuckoo note.

The people below, ignorant that the vegetable is to be procured before May, imagined that we were making an April-fool of him.

But the wines ! Good luck, the wines ! If high prices could insure excellence in that way, the *Plantagenet carte* certainly promised the best vintages. The cheapest sherry was 6s. 6d. per bottle. That being absolutely

nauseous, we ordered the dearest (well was it called Golden!), at 8s. 6d.

'Now, *this*,' said Mecænas, smacking his fastidious lips, and addressing the unconscious waiter as though he were an immense congregation of attentive listeners—'this, although not good, is drinkable.'

My own firm and settled conviction is, that the one wine was identically the same as the other, except that, in the second case, they had added a little water: but even this scanty meed of praise I welcomed gladly. Little by little, Slyboots had shifted the whole responsibility of our coming to Shinglebeach upon my shoulders, and whatever went right, I was determined should go to my credit. The champagne was really not bad, and charged for at little more than double the price we should have paid for it in London.

The air was beautiful. Whenever we complained of anything amiss at Shinglebeach, the inhabitants were always prompt to reply: 'That may be; but then, what a beautiful air we have!'

This I do not deny; indeed, it ought to be good, for that air—taking the usual time allowed by the best medical authorities for expansion and contraction of the lungs—I calculated to cost us exactly fourpence-halfpenny a breath. No poet could treat himself to an inspiration down at Shinglebeach, and therefore the place will remain for ever unsung; otherwise, if a bard should ever make immortal that locality, and eulogise (by poetical license) the *Plantagenet*, he will scarcely fail to make mention of the reforms inaugurated in that establishment by five strangers—angels unawares—who once were lodged there. I say 'lodged' there advisedly, because, as will be seen, we were not altogether boarded. After that first dinner, we were of opinion that our breakfast could not be left to the discretion of the cook, so we summoned the landlord in person. It was no wonder that there was no flavour of George IV about him—no courtliness—no magnificent politeness. Nine landlords, since that Augustan epoch, had made their fortunes out of that inn. Of his wines, which were of the best brands,

he said [had he the faintest notion of what he was talking about?], no complaint had ever been made before. Asparagus was unattainable so early in the year. Gentlemen could scarcely expect fish for breakfast down at the sea.

'Well, let us have kidneys, and have done with it,' ejaculated Mecænas wearily.

'Kidneys, Sir,' returned the landlord in a deprecatory tone. 'Well, you see, Sir, with respect to kidneys, *Shinglebeach is such a little place.*'

We roared.

'Curiously ignorant of anatomy,' murmured Slyboots, to whom ignorance (manifested in others) is always bliss.

'Look here,' cried Brighteyes; 'may we order things in if we can find them in the town?'

'Most certainly,' replied the landlord, not one whit abashed.

And we did so. We bought kidneys (although it was such a little place), and asparagus and seakale, paying, however, a very considerable corkage on those delicacies. We introduced, too, apparently for the first time, into this establishment the condiment called salad, the materials for making which were obtained from the alien waiter by what is called 'the exhaustive process'—by rejecting a thousand things he brought, which were of no use, such as lemons, jam, a nutmeg-grater with nothing in it, and (especially) a local guide-book.

It was a perusal of this last which induced us to exchange our quarters for the *Travellers' Joy*, 'a small but comfortable country inn immediately opposite the most interesting ruin in all England.'

Slyboots had secured upon the downs a splendid specimen of that rare beetle, in search of which, and with no other object whatsoever, he had in reality brought us all to Shinglebeach, and was as anxious to depart as the rest of us. There was a stone gargoyle—the subject of much archæological controversy—somewhere about the historical ruin alluded to, which also attracted him in that direction.

'A country inn,' said he, in his mellifluous tones, 'is a

most charming affair : its snow-white coverlets, with a scent of lavender about them ; its fresh eggs and cream ; its excellent home-brewed ale. Then the house itself so picturesque and unpretending ; roses and honeysuckles contending for the mastery upon its cheerful face ; a hundred creepers——'

'Yes, beside those which are inside,' quoth Faintheart. 'I perceive it will be a failure already. We should certainly have gone to Paris.'

'Or better still, to Menue,' observed Mecænas.

'Waited upon,' continued Slyboots, without minding these interruptions in the least, 'by a simple but beautiful country maiden, fresh as the morn.'

'And who can speak English,' added Brighteyes with vivacity ; 'who labours under no depressing political circumstances. We will go to the *Travellers' Joy* to-morrow.'

On the morrow, therefore, after having despatched our luggage by train—for the village with the ruin was on a line of railway—we started on foot for our romantic country-quarters. Our bill at the *Plantagenet* was something enormous. We might have lived at the *Clarendon*, in town, for less money—and not been compelled to buy our own vegetables—so that, although we were glad enough to have got quit of the place, we felt like prisoners newly enfranchised indeed, but who had paid a most exorbitant sum for ransom. Only Brighteyes was merry. When asked the reason of his offensive cheerfulness, he only replied : 'Ha ! ha !' like a demon. We had left the inn, and climbed a little hill surmounting it, before he deigned to communicate the cause of his hilarity. 'In the first place,' said he, 'there is this guide-book, which I have taken from the *Plantagenet* without paying for it : surely in itself some source of congratulation. And secondly, within the guide-book I have found these words of unspeakable comfort.

'“It is a melancholy reflection,” quoted he, with gloating rapture, “that the devouring sea is slowly but surely making inroads upon Shinglebeach. In a decade of years” [that is guide-book for ten years, my Faintheart],

"it is doubtful whether the Esplanade itself, including that famous establishment, the *Plantagenet*, will not be encroached upon—nay, utterly overwhelmed!"

With a common impulse of fervent gratitude, such as is seldom seen except upon the stage, the whole party reverently raised their hats, and exclaimed: 'Thank goodness!'

'Fish-me-no-fishes will have fish enough then and to spare,' exclaimed Mecænas indignantly.

'Nay,' said Faintheart, 'the poor waiter, although he serves an extortionate master, is, as Mr. Gladstone has truly reminded us, our own flesh and blood.'

'Ah! he is not, however, *my* fellow-countryman,' observed Brighteyes drily.

'Hush, hush, my friends,' exclaimed Slyboots in his most impressive manner. 'Let us be charitable to all. The *Plantagenet* is doubtless exorbitant in its charges upon this very account. It knows that it has but a few years to live. We are now travelling inland, where no such excuse can be pleaded; where country pleasures, country produce, and objects of archæological interest

Here the savant found himself alone, the rest of the party having set off with some precipitancy when it was perceived that he was about to make a speech. Winking, therefore, at the surrounding objects, to express the mutual understanding known to exist between himself and all the works of nature, Slyboots trotted on after his friends.

It is the peculiarity of all country places that they are a good deal further off than common report asserts, or even than they appear to be in the landscape. The day was warm, the dust was thick, and we were thoroughly wayworn before the majestic ruin, opposite which we were to find the *Travellers' Joy*, began to appear. Mecænas (who is rather stout) felt perhaps most of all of us the effects of this protracted exertion, and a circumstance presently occurred which combined to prostrate his energies still further. Meeting an ancient rustic carrying a flail—quite a picturesque object, if one had

not been so tired—he must needs enquire of him, in his grand manner, as to whether the ruin before us was *the* ruin for which we were bound [as though there were likely to be two ruins, each about the size of Chester, within a stone's-throw of one another.]

‘My good man,’ exclaimed Mecænas, with the air of a lord of the soil remitting the punishment of death to his vassal, ‘is yonder ruin Fountains Abbey?’ [Let us call it so, though, of course, it was not *that*.]

It is impossible to describe in words the triumphant cunning which overspread that peasant's face as he replied: ‘Well, I dare say you knows just as well as I does;’ and with that he went chuckling down the road.

‘I really believe,’ quoth Mecænas loftily, ‘that that poor creature imagines that he has the advantage of me.’

‘Well, upon my life,’ said Brighteyes (and he expressed the feelings of us all), ‘I do think he has.’

What with this unfortunate rencontre and his fatigue, Mecænas could only be kept in motion by dilating upon the luncheon we would order upon our arrival, just as a bundle of hay dangled before a beast of burden is said to encourage it to renewed endeavours.

‘We will have a cold lunch,’ said Mecænas, ‘because it can be most promptly prepared.’

‘Cold lamb and mint-sauce,’ affirmed Brighteyes unctuously.

‘And Faintheart shall make the salad,’ added Slyboots, ‘in the approved manner used by his beloved country before it was absorbed by the Prussian Eagle; then afterwards, smoking the choice Havana, we will meditate in these noble ruins upon the glorious past——’

‘If you can only get there,’ observed Faintheart gloomily. ‘This high wall runs all round.’

‘That is merely to preserve them,’ explained the savant. ‘This historic pile is the heritage of every Briton—— What *is* the matter?’

Mecænas had dropped down upon a milestone as suddenly as if he had been shot, and was pointing feebly to an edifice that had just loomed in sight, if a one-storied house, presenting but four windows and a door, can be

said to loom. Upon its narrow forehead was painted the mocking words *The Travellers' Joy*.

'It may be very nice *inside*, though,' observed the savant, whose mind, intent on the stone gargoyle, was the first to recover from this moral shock.

Nobody answered him. Only a muffled cry of 'Lunch, lunch!' escaped from the lips of Mecænas.

We pressed on. The inn, so far from being the picturesque edifice the imagination of Slyboots had depicted, was like one of those fifth-rate places of entertainment in large towns which are called coffee-houses. The gates of the old ruin did indeed stand opposite, or we might have clung to the hope that there was still some shocking mistake. In that supreme moment I acknowledged to myself that there were worse places to lodge at than the *Plantagenet*. As for our sleeping in the house before us, the thing was impossible. *The Travellers' Joy* had barely accommodation for one traveller.

'What have you got in the house that is cold?' enquired Mecænas of the red-handed, black-faced female who answered the summons. He spoke with great elaboration and the quiet calmness of despair. 'Cold lamb—mint-sauce—salad. *Anything* cold ; only be quick about it.'

'We have nothing *exactly cold*, Sir, in the house,' replied the damsel.

'What *can* she mean?' enquired Mecænas feebly. 'I am not equal to argue with this person. Nothing *exactly cold* !'

'It is my belief,' observed Faintheart gloomily, 'that she means there is a human body in the house—some person recently deceased.'

'Goodness gracious !' exclaimed Brighteyes, hastily recrossing the threshold ; 'which is the way to the railway station ?'

'My good girl,' resumed Mecænas meekly, 'we are very hungry, and shall be thankful for whatever you can give us. If you have nothing cold, have you anything hot ?'

'No, Sir ; we have nothing *exactly hot*.'

'Then what *have* you got?' enquired the judicious Slyboots.

'We have bread and cheese, Sir,' replied the maiden. 'Please step into the parlour.'

This was a cheerless apartment, which, by the smell of it, I should think had been hermetically sealed throughout the winter. It had five horsehair chairs in it, the contents of which had been much rifled—perhaps for *chignons*. A very extensive tea-tray upon the sideboard exhibited a picture of the local ruin executed in mother-of-pearl. Above the fireplace there was a portrait of a stout lady advanced in years. 'The recently deceased,' observed Faintheart in explanation.

'Where is the beer?' asked Brighteyes, when a loaf of stale bread, and a piece of cheese dreadfully like yellow soap, had been placed upon the table.

The maiden nodded, and presently appeared, like one in an allegory, bearing five stone bottles. 'The inn is a temperance house, and we have only *ginger-beer*,' explained she. 'Master begs you will be very careful with it.'

'Is it so strong, then?' enquired Faintheart cynically.

'Oh no, Sir; far from that; only he hopes you won't let it fly about, and spile the furniture.'

There was nothing for it but submission. A ghastly smile played upon our wayworn faces as we sat down to this repast. We had not the spirits to speak.

Slyboots only, still clinging to the gergoyle, requested the attendant to get the keys, in order that we might presently explore the historical ruins.

'O Sir,' said she, 'it's very unlucky, but the family don't allow the ruins to be shown at all this week, it being Easter-week. Now, any other time in the year that you should please to come down—'

Mecænas rose, and leaving the room without a word, moved slowly down the street towards the railway station; and one by one, each followed his example. We sat in the bare waiting-room of the little station for about four hours, until a train came—the only one in the day that stopped at that hateful place—and took us to London.

The catastrophe was too complete to admit of reproaches. Once only, on that prolonged journey (for it was a parliamentary train), there was a murmur from Faintheart.

‘If they had but taken my advice, and gone to Paris.’

‘Ay, or mine,’ echoed Mecaenas feebly; ‘if we had but gone to Menue.’





THE ULTRA-MARINE.

I KNOW something about hotels in England, both big and little. I have 'put up,' more than once—in the sense of 'to bear, to suffer'—with the accommodation at the *Universal Unlimited*, where you rise in a patent lift, through floor after floor, like a stage-ghost, until you arrive at the seventh—but if they call it a seventh heaven, that's a story. Who are the people that go about praising such caravansarais? Are they lunatics or paid agents? Or is it for the very love of lying that folks are to be found to echo that advertisement about 'the conveniences of a hotel combined with the comforts of a home?' Convenience! Comfort! It is said there are two hundred waiters, but 'what care I (as Sir John Suckling sings) how many there be, if there be not one for *me*?' I have rung and rung up in that attic with the latest improvements, until I have thought nobody could have heard anything *but* my bell, and yet not one of that 'efficient staff of servants, kept upon every floor,' has deigned to pay the least attention. It is a great satisfaction, doubtless, to some minds to know that there is a Great Chamberlain, with a private sitting-room of his own down stairs, to superintend such matters; but for my part, I would exchange him gladly for a page-boy out of livery, a maid-of-all-work, nay, a black, in my more immediate neighbourhood, who would procure me what I want at the first summons.

Similarly, to know that the cook is called a *chef*, and that he has five-and-twenty myrmidons in white caps and white aprons, is not only enough (as it ought to be), but as good as the feast itself which it is their duty to prepare. I, on the other hand, want my meals; and provided that they are good of their kind, and punctually served, I do not care three farthings for the machinery which has produced them. At the *Universal Unlimited*, it invariably happens that 'we are so exceedingly busy just now' that the dinner is considerably behind hand, and the intervals between the courses prodigious; the waiters run on with the dishes as in a pantomime, then hasten away to execute their daily feat of serving five hundred tables in an hour and a half. Like Falstaff (almost), they are not only waiters themselves, but the cause of waiting in other people. Moreover, if the hall-porter, instead of having a gold band round his cap, and a chair of state with a canopy whereon to sit, could manage to place my letters in my own sitting-room, instead of other people's, and *vice versa*, I should prefer that alternative, even though he performed his duty in his shirt-sleeves. Also, when I want a piece of sealing-wax, or the loan of a pair of slippers, as the case may be, I don't wish to be referred to a department, as though I were the country at large, and the *U. U.* were the government, because, as we are all aware, that is only a synonym for infinite delay.

I am pretty well acquainted, too, with another sort of inn called the *Fine Old Crusted*, a *Family Hotel*, which lives upon its reputation; and I am happy to say has, in consequence, nearly got to the end of it. The principle feature of these establishments is dulness: the flavour that pervades them is dusty, rusty, musty, and fusty. They are almost admirably adapted for the convenience of persons belonging to 'much-respected' firms or banking-houses on the verge of insolvency, to end their days by violence. Not only is there nothing to seduce the mind that is bent on self-destruction to cheerfulness, but the furniture and fittings, the demeanour of the attendants, and the hush and gloom of the atmosphere, are most conducive to this fell purpose. Nay, if a person of a lively

fancy enter the portals of such an establishment, he very soon gets toned down to the appropriate pitch of genteel melancholy. If the landlady (a widow with a smile that reminds one of the silent tomb) doesn't do it, the head-waiter (formerly an undertaker's man) will do it; and if not they, the amount of the bill will most certainly do it; and you will leave that house a sadder and a poorer man. I was at such a family hotel lately, where they charged fourpence for an hour's loan of the *Times* newspaper. I ventured to suggest that the cost-price was but three-pence. The widow replied that, in her dear husband's lifetime, the parlours always paid their fourpence an hour; and, with Heaven's blessing, she would respect his memory, by keeping matters as they were. It was at this place, I think, that they charged the gentleman for the use of plate and glass, who had a tumbler of hot gin and water, and a spoon to stir it with, as he sat upon the coach-box outside the door.

I had had considerable experience of both these classes of hotels, as well as of others of a less ambitious sort; and not without reason, I flattered myself, like Mr. Dickens's Dollmaker, that I knew their tricks and their manners.

When, therefore, I was told that the *Ultra-marine* at Shingleton was an exception to all British caravansarais in the perfection of its arrangements and accommodation, I smiled good-naturedly upon my enthusiastic informant, and replied: 'Ah!' with significance. I concluded it would only turn out an exception in the sense of proving the rule. But as three of my friends and myself were about to leave London, as was our custom in the early summer, for a week's holiday, with all the world before us where to choose, it was determined, upon the great national principle of holding a man innocent until his guilt is proved, to give the *Ultra-marine* a fair trial: we had also about as much faith in its innocence as the public has in that of any criminal accused of a capital crime—and no more; for we four had tried so many inns in these periodical expeditions of ours—by the sea-side and on land, in town and country; and we had no

illusions to be disenchanted of with respect to such places.

And yet, so long as we could do as we liked—which proviso was indispensable—and were well housed and fed, we were not difficult to please. Of exalted social position at home, we sank our respective dignities when on these excursions of pleasure; and although the superscriptions upon the letters sent to us through the post remained as usual (and very useful they were in extorting respect, I do assure you), we ourselves were accustomed to address one another in a style somewhat more than familiar. It was our humour to counterfeit a small travelling menagerie, of which the Artemus Ward, or showman, was myself; the rare and valuable animals being, first, a distinguished member of the Alpine Club, playfully designated as the Rum-tum-foozle-um, or Climbing Ape—described (though falsely) by some natural historians as poisoning himself upon the tip of his tail while wondering at the works of nature; secondly, a prompt and wily individual, with a dangerous glitter in his eye at whist, which betrayed his possession of four by honours (he always held them), and who was termed the Serpent; thirdly, a gentleman of august proportions and constitutional opinions, known in political circles as the Great Conservative Body, but with us affectionately designated as the Performing Elephant, the best tempered and most sagacious creature that it is possible to imagine.

These names came to our lips, of course, as naturally as Jones and Brown to those of vulgar persons; but the listening to them was always a trial to the gravity of the waiters who attended upon us. We were sometimes left wholly without attendance, while they rushed out of the room, and exploded with laughter immediately on the other side of the door; nor could they be induced to return for several minutes, notwithstanding that the Rum-tum-foozle-um would fly to the bell with characteristic agility, the Serpent flicker (audibly) with his double tongue, and the Elephant trumpet so vigorously as to attract astonished crowds to our open window. These were the only occasions upon which I lost my control over this

otherwise truly 'happy family:' they would not listen to the voice of their Artemus while kept waiting for their food.

When we read in the train, on our way down to Shingleton, that there was an archbishop staying at the *Ultra-marine*, we looked at one another uneasily; not that we were not attached to the ecclesiastical establishment of our native land, or would not have died (so far, at least, as the Elephant was concerned) to have preserved its dignitaries; but should we be able to do as we liked in a house where there was an archbishop? I saw the Serpent wriggle, and the Rum-tum clutch at the carriage-cradle above his head, as though it would have relieved his mind to climb. But we had engaged our apartments, and it was too late. The *Ultra-marine* is a magnificent house, abutting, nay, overhanging (as its name implies) the deep blue sea. But for it, Shingleton would be nothing; while from its presence it derives fashion, fame, prosperity. Nobody knows how the colossal hotel arose; like most remarkable inventions, its originators are not to be discovered. It is darkly rumoured that they perished beneath the weight of their enterprise, and were mentioned (but not favourably) in the *Gazette*. Then another company took the matter up, and brought the building to completion: of course, they had no money left wherewith to furnish it, so a third set of speculators took their places at the pumps (for the difficulty in keeping such a monster afloat was prodigious), and stocked the *Ultra-marine* from garret to basement. But, instead of having done this in the ordinary hotel manner, there is not a single horsehair sofa, nor a convex mirror with an eagle on it, in any of the parlours, nor a wool-mattress on one of the beds. The living-apartments are not mere dining-rooms with a rickety chiffonier added, but are as home-like as it is possible for apartments to be which are not one's own; the sleeping rooms are provided with all one (or two) can wish, with the exception of rough towels—an omission, doubtless, owing to extreme delicacy of feeling on the part of the management. The comforts of the body are of course provided for. There are cold-

baths, in whose marble depths you may procure the privacy which is denied you when using the machines upon the beach, and almost the coolness of the spectators; there are warm ones so seductive that they well-nigh persuade one to 'breathe a vein' in them (not, of course, in the marble, but in one's self), and leave the world like a philosopher. There are billiard-rooms, but cut off from the house by double-doors, so that the clergy staying in the hotel should not be scandalised. The best emotions of the human heart are fostered and encouraged. There is a ladies' coffee-room, into whose sacred portals it is quite a treat for a bachelor to peep, upon his way to or from his lonely chamber. Finally, the intellect is not neglected. There is a reading-room, open to every visitor at the *Ultra-marine*, amply supplied with copies of *Chambers's Journal*.

It will easily be imagined that I could not have introduced my menagerie into the coffee-room, even if they had been willing to enliven its spacious solemnity with their presence; but our private sitting-room was everything that could be desired.

'Ha, ha! a clock!' ejaculated the Elephant; 'there will, therefore, be no excuse for our meals being unpunctual.'

'A nice table for whist,' murmured the Serpent, 'supposing we were so unfortunate as to have bad weather.' [There was nothing this abominable reptile liked better than rain.]

But the Rum-tum-foozle-um uttered not a word. I attributed this to the flatness of the scenery through which we had lately travelled, for unless this animal perceives hills, he becomes dispirited.

'Come,' said I reassuringly, 'we passed a ruined castle, perched upon quite a precipice, a few miles from this: you shall climb up that to-morrow.'

But the Rum-tum-foozle-um shook his head. 'It is not *that*,' said he. 'But I don't like the gorgeous splendour of this apartment; those fine cut ornaments upon the mantelpiece, and that elaborate sofa: and I tell you what I don't like, my Artemus, I don't like those MAGNIFICENT

CURTAINS. Mark my words: *We shall not be allowed to smoke.'*

At this terrible prognostication, the other two members of the menagerie turned as pale as though they had just been smoking for the first time, and the proprietor sank into a spring arm-chair, which, almost under any other circumstances than the present, would doubtless have afforded him comfort.

'Let us know the worst,' remarked I with calmness. Ring the bell.'

'I *can't*,' replied the Rum-tum-foozle-um with a mocking laugh. 'Oh, dear me, but this is a great deal too fine for *us*.'

He pointed to a placard above the bell-handle, upon which was printed: *This bell being constructed upon the atmospheric principle, visitors are requested to pull out the handle as far as it will come, and then press it back sharply.* The faces of the menagerie, including that of its proprietor, upon the receipt of this intelligence, afforded a study for any delineator of the sublimer emotions.

'Try it,' cried I, the first to recover myself from the natural stupor induced by scientific information.

'It may be dangerous: try it yourself,' murmured the Serpent doubtfully, and acceding to my request with the utmost caution. A dull thud, evidently confined to our own apartment, was all that came of it. Irritated by this failure, I seized the recalcitrant knob, pulled it out to its full limit, and let it go. The same dull thud was the reply. Except for the monotony of the sound produced, the whole scene reminded me of Collins's *Passions* in their attempt to play the guitar.

First Fear, his hand, its skill to try,
 Amid the chords bewildered laid,
 And back recoiled, he knew not why,
 Even at the sound himself had made.
 Next Anger rushed, his eyes on fire,
 In lightnings owned his secret stings,
 In one rude clash he struck the lyre,
 Which rings not, though it says it rings.

* * *

With eyes upraised, as one inspired,
 The Rum-tum-foozle-um sat retired,

like Melancholy herself, and could hardly be induced to try his hand at all at what his mind with reason misgave him would turn out to be a most miserable failure.

'Last came Joy's ecstatic trial,' and to the unlively pipe his trunk addressed. A clear and decisive 'ping' in some region without was the immediate result. Our Elephant had rung the bell! and from that moment (as in most other menageries) this sagacious animal was solely intrusted with that office.

When the waiter appeared, his reply to the great smoke question was, that there was a room of splendid proportions fitted up expressly *for* smoking.

'That means "No,"' murmured the Rum-tum dolefully, as the attendant withdrew. 'I knew how it would be. I must have my pipe in peace in my own arm-chair. I cannot ascend three stories after dinner.'

'Nor I,' said the Serpent viciously. 'I should like to see myself at it.'

'Nor I,' ejaculated the Elephant with a confident melancholy; 'it would be impossible, unless there is a lift.'

'My good creatures,' observed I, rising with the occasion, 'do not be despondent. After food, you will be brave and defiant. We will have our smoke to-night, even if we leave the *Ultra-marine* to-morrow.'

So, after a really excellent dinner, the *entrées* whereof had not previously (as is usual) been handed round at other tables, we ordered coffee; and when the waiter arrived with it, he found us each smoking a pipe, as Mother Hubbard found her dog Tray, and I think he was scarcely less astonished. Nevertheless, our silence and profound puffings, so like the Great War Council of the Ojibbeways, awed him to that degree that he made no verbal remonstrance. Thus our independence was proclaimed. Otherwise, had he 'gone to the manager'—a threat at the *Ultra-marine* for which there is no equivalent in the language of menace—there is no knowing what would have happened. That tremendous personage never presented himself to vision during our stay; but it was understood, that, in his private suite of apart-

ments upon the ground-floor, he maintained an almost regal state and splendour. His wife, who was visible in the *Ultra-marine* firmament at certain fixed epochs, was a magnificent person, of affable, though stately manners, from whom each visitor received a bow at his arrival, and another (if his conduct merited it) at his departure. And there were two charming young ladies in what the vulgar would call 'the bar'—a sort of Crystal Palace in miniature—who smiled and courtesied to each of us as we came down to breakfast every morning, and made me tremble for my too susceptible charges.

At 11 P.M., the waiter came to ask if we wanted anything more, as the establishment was about to close. The archbishop had already retired (archbishops' candlesticks, it was whispered, were supplied by the management with a small silver mitre, instead of the ordinary extinguisher); the nobility in the first floor had sought their coroneted couches (an ample supply of coronets being kept in stock); it was therefore fitting, he hinted, that the untitled gentry (for, no letters having yet arrived for us, our rank remained unknown) should retire likewise, and without making the least disturbance.

'I never go to bed till one,' observed the Rum-tum-foozle-um with decision; 'but as I always swarm up the banisters, nobody will hear a foot-fall.'

'As for me,' said the Serpent, 'I crawl upon my stomach, and make no noise.'

The waiter looked at the Elephant. That conscientious animal, well aware that the poet has truly described him as 'the huge earth-shaking beast,' took up his candle, and trotted off up stairs; while visitors paused at their toilets, and imagined that the night-express was panting in.

'As for me, I must sit up with my two animals,' said I, 'for they are not to be trusted; but I will retire to rest upon all-fours, and with my boots in my mouth.'

By 11 30, the whole establishment was bathed in slumber: the illimitable sea was imitating the *Ultra-marine*; all Shingleton was abed and asleep. In hushed voices, we whispered to one another of our experiences of other inns, and agreed we had never been in such a place

before—never. We listened, in the solemn silence of the night, and fancied we detected at intervals the archiepiscopal snore. The situation would have been sublime, but for the cachinnation of the Serpent, who always finds something ludicrous in the arrangements of good society. At one, we softly opened the door, and sought the candles that we had seen upon the table outside. There were now no candles. All was space and gloom. What were we to do? We could not carry away our chandelier with us. We could never find our way to our own apartments in the dark. What if we should wander into the archiepiscopal chamber, and be excommunicated before we could explain the circumstances! The ticking of the Louis Quatorze clock in the great hall was the only sound to be heard. I touched the Serpent, and felt him wriggle and shake with suppressed malice. ‘If you want to laugh, Sir,’ observed I severely, ‘go back to the sitting-room; the Rum-tum-foozle-um and myself will explore the establishment.’ We did so. A light glimmered down upon us from the topmost story, and we made for it with caution and without our shoes. I counted thirteen corridors and eleven flights of stairs. It was like Piranesi’s dream, as described by De Quincey. At last we perceived that what we sought was only a star shining through the skylight. By 2 A.M. we had got down again. There was a hissing noise in the hall, concerning the nature of which it was impossible I should be deceived. The Serpent was there, and in trouble. Contrary to my express commandment, he had gone gliding about the house in the grateful darkness, when a light was suddenly flashed upon him, and he found himself in the custody of the night chamberlain. Our travel-worn appearance, and the boots which we carried in our hands, corroborated our story, and we obtained his release and our bed-candles.

This was the sole misunderstanding that took place between any one of us and the authorities of *the Ultra-marine*: our relations with them grew friendlier and friendlier the longer we stayed. The cooks, both French and English, vied with one another to produce repasts

that should receive our approbation, and their efforts were most successful. When they sometimes outdid themselves by the production of some gorgeous sweetmeat that looked more like a Twelfth-cake ornament, or a firework, than something to eat, we never hurt their feelings by leaving it untouched. A large piece was always given to the Elephant, who, if he didn't like it, bolted it whole, and then trumpeted triumphantly. After the third exhibition of this performance, our waiter was able to remain in the room, pretending to busy himself at the sideboard, with his back towards us, and his shoulders shaking, while the majestic animal bid him inform the cook that the article in question was very good. I think I never laughed so much during the whole course of my life as I did during that week at Shingleton. The proceedings of my animals (which nevertheless, be it observed, are at all times polite and decorous) were so altogether different from those of the *habitués* of the *Ultra-marine*, that they often affected me to tears. When we tore ourselves away at the week's end, and the manageress gave me her plump white hand, like the Queen at a drawing-room, I thought I ought to apologise for their apparent eccentricities. 'The Elephant is young and frolicsome,' said I—'that's all. The Serpent is not quite so wicked as he looks. The Rum-tum-foozle-um is a good creature, although so restless.'

'My dear Sir,' returned she with a gracious smile, 'we are charmed with all of you. We are a little dull here at times. Your presence has been a great relief to the archiepiscopal element. We hope to see you again.'

'Madam,' said I, with profound respect, and raising a finger-tip to my lips, 'we shall never go anywhere else.'

And we never shall.



OUR LAST LODGINGS.

TET me make myself understood, reader, at the outset. The above title does not refer to that bourne from which no traveller ever returns, and which some have therefore identified with Kilburn. It means simply what it says. I propose to describe the last lodgings occupied by myself and my friend Grateman last Easter, the awful circumstances of which seem certainly worth telling, although they have given each of us a considerable distaste for leaving home at that festive season, for the future. I told Grateman how it would be before we started; but he is always self-opinionated; and when he has 'the gout flying about him,' as he calls it, which he happened to have at the period in question (for I am sorry to say that although he eats fish in Lent, he does not confine himself to that article by any means), he is as obstinate as a mule.

'My good soul,' said I, persuasively, 'it is idle to think of "running down" to Sandcliff at Easter-time, at a moment's notice. The place is chokeful. We shall not find a roof to put our heads under; and even if we start by the first train, we cannot be down there till ten o'clock.'

'And plenty of time too,' interrupted he impatiently. 'The moon will be up, and the sea will be looking lovely. The doctors say I require "a thorough change," and the

sooner I get it the better. As for rooms, I'll telegraph to the hotel at once.'

We telegraphed accordingly, and the reply came back : ' Hotel quite full throughout the week ; no lodgings to be procured in the town.'

' That's all nonsense,' explained Grateman on the receipt of this discouraging intelligence. ' They're like the dog in the manger, these hotels : if they can't take one in themselves, they do all they can to hinder others from taking one in. Now, I tell you what I'll do. In order to ensure everything being in readiness for us when we arrive—for I don't deny the town may be full—I'll telegraph to Frank Surpliss ; fellow that was in my year at Oriel, and who lives at Sandcliff ; popular preacher there : wish I'd thought of it before.'

' You can rely upon him, can you ?'

' Of course I can. We were always in the same boat at college, and very literally, too, for he pulled stroke, and I pulled bow in the eight.' So he sat down and wrote : *From James Grateman, Colchicum Terrace, London, to Frank Surpliss, Clergyman, Sandcliff* (' Is that the way to put it, eh ? However, the clerk will make it right.') *Two bed-rooms and a sitting-room, somewhere, for to-night. Have some supper ready ; and join us.*—' There : if he is anything like what he was five years ago, he'll snap at that like a trout at a fly. So now, you see, you've got everything settled.'

If I had, Grateman had not. It takes a great deal to settle him comfortably when he has ' the gout flying about him.' He must have everything nice, and a good deal of it, and to the minute, or else his irritation does not confine itself to his toe. In travelling, particularly, he is at such periods hard to please. He must have the seat opposite to him in the railway carriage kept for the accommodation of his feet ; and if anybody ventures even into the next seat, his manner becomes unpleasant. On the present occasion, however, we secured a ' through ' carriage to ourselves, by the judicious investment of a florin ; and Grateman took off his boots, and stowed away his many travelling appurtenances overhead and

underfoot, with that sense of security that fears no change. At the junction, where a train from another part of London was wont to meet our own, there was a great crowd of passengers, but the silver key which had secured our places had fastened our door, and we remained undisturbed throughout the usual time spent in stoppage. At the last moment, however, an official put his head in at the window, and cried out: 'Change, here. Make haste, gentlemen; there is not an instant to lose.'

'We want no change, man,' answered Grateman in the words of Montezuma, in *Pizarro*, and with much the same magnificent expression of countenance. 'We are booked through to Sandcliff.'

'We always change here at Easter-time, Sir; and you must hurry, *I* can tell you, if you don't wish to be left behind.'

Remonstrance, rage, and an everlasting rancour against the fellow who had so unconscientiously taken his florin, had to be suppressed for the time, while the unhappy Grateman huddled his chattels together, and *with his boots in his mouth* (I speak the literal truth), limped across the platform to the departing train. It was full of Easter excursionists, and yet even they resented his appearance and costume, and we only obtained places with the utmost difficulty, and to the great discontent of our fellow-travellers. I really don't think they were to blame for objecting to our society: it was not only that appearances were against my companion as to clothes; indignation, and the not being able to breathe with facility (through his boots), gave him a very truculent appearance. So soon as circumstances admitted of speech, he indulged for some minutes in indiscriminate invective, and then (his sense of humour overcoming his sense of wrong) suddenly burst into roars of laughter. The company evidently took him for a maniac; and when I endeavoured to calm him, it was equally clear that they set me down as his keeper. It was a long and wearisome journey, the train stopping everywhere, because it was Easter-time, and we did not arrive at Sandcliff till past ten at night. There was no Frank Surpliss to meet us, nor did the station-

master know his address, nor was there any message for us of any kind.

There was not even a fly to take us and our luggage ; for the town was as full of lodgers as an egg of meat, and no more were expected by the flymen. There was one very small omnibus, belonging to the *Black Horse Hotel*, from which we had received the unpromising telegram, and into that we crowded with four others—a man and his wife, who were in the same houseless position as ourselves : a stout old lady, whose absence would have been a relief, yet who observed that it really was not worth while for her to ride at all, since she had such a little way to go ; and a good-natured-looking young man, who unintentionally incurred our hate by stating that he was particularly fortunate, since he had not only a bed at the hotel, but friends in Alma Road, who could have taken him in had he wished it, only it was pleasanter at the hotel. When we reached the inn, we were of course informed that there was no room ; but the good-natured young man, after a short but sharp inward struggle, gave up his apartment to the married couple, and, got into the 'bus again, the driver of which was instructed by us to try the other inn. This was a long way off, and the good-natured young man, conscious of self-sacrifice, thought it very hard that he was not taken to Alma Road. The stout old lady, too, reiterated her remark that she lived so near at hand that it was hardly worth while for her to ride. At the *Gray Mare* we were informed with triumph that it was fuller than its rival ; but that lodgings were to be procured in Babylon Terrace. This was a sort of hanging-garden half-way up the cliff, and took us twenty minutes to reach it, during which the good-natured young man grew very melancholy, and even the stout old lady murmured that 'if she had only know'd she would never have ridden.' At Babylon Terrace we were informed that 'the 'ouse was full—and no thanks to them people at the *Gray Mare*—a week ago and more.' It was now considerably past eleven, and Graterman's expressive countenance was quite a picture. 'Let us order supper,' said he, 'at the inn, at all events.' But even

that idea failed to dissipate his gloomy forebodings, and he enquired significantly of the stout old lady, evidently with an eye to the worst, at what time in the morning the sun rose in those parts. We both, indeed, began to look at the 'bus with a view to its convenience as a sleeping apartment, and a most unpromising appearance it presented. 'I *do* wish he'd go to Alma Road,' muttered the once good-natured young man, with testy impatience; and, 'Well, I might ha' got to my place sooner on my own legs,' echoed our lady-companion.

At the *Gray Mare* we got out with our portmanteaus; and whether that poor young man ever got to Alma Road, or that old lady ever reached the home that lay so near, and yet seemed unapproachable, I know not. There is no space in these columns for any woes except our own. Our first act was to promise a mighty guerdon to 'the boots,' if only he should succeed in getting us apartments for the night; and off he started for that purpose, so sanguine and self-reliant, that we sat down to our late supper in tolerable spirits. But as the minutes flew by, and one after another of the inmates of the coffee-room went off to bed with a cheerful 'Good-night' to their friends, and the clock-hand drew near to midnight, and yet the boots returned not, we began to experience a collapse. The landlady had already offered us two sofas in the ladies' coffee-room, which Grateman had declined with thanks. Both of us might, under the circumstances, be said to be of a retiring disposition, but Grateman was particularly modest; and the idea of sleeping in an apartment devoted by day to the fair sex, and to which one of them might at any time return, having by chance forgotten something, was too much for his nerves. As time wore on, however, we began to think less delicately upon this matter, and sent out the waiter to say that we would have the sofas. The reply came back, that they had been taken since our arrival by two distinguished foreigners, who were already in occupation of them.

We had no hope that any good-natured young man at the *Gray Mare* would turn out for *us*; for we had already

become unpopular with the guests of that establishment. The few late sitters up in the coffee-room were of a genial, not to say convivial turn, and had endeavoured to enter into conversation with us ; but we, engrossed by the terrible circumstances of our position, had rejected their advances ; their well-meant and civil remarks about the weather and Mr. Disraeli had seemed but bald disjointed chat to us ; and they, good lack ! had taken the inattention of us poor houseless wanderers for pride. At midnight, the boots returned, dispirited, jaded, down-at-heel (if I may use the expression) with the news, that there was but one bed in the town, and that a very little one. Grateman and I looked at one another significantly as each produced a silver coin from his pocket. 'You toss, I cry,' said my companion gloomily. 'Tails.' I think by his tone he felt he was going to lose. The shilling came down with the blessed effigy of her gracious Majesty uppermost, and the vacant bed was mine.

'No,' said I, with a burst of magnanimity ; 'you have the gout. Take it ; enjoy it (I mean the bed) ; and never mind me.'

If a lover of human nature (whereas there was only the sleepy waiter) had been in that coffee-room, he could not have failed to be pleased at the ensuing spectacle ; at the generous disinterestedness (although I say it who should be silent) upon the one side, and at the forbearance and disinclination to take advantage of a disinterested liberality upon the other. Grateman said it was he who had cajoled me down to Sandcliff ; and indeed it was quite true that his ridiculous obstinacy and self-confidence had alone brought us to this dreadful pass. But I said : 'Pooh, pooh ; we are equally to blame' (though that, of course, was absurd). The noble struggle as to who should suffer for both was really touching. At last, the unsympathetic waiter observed that the house was a-going to shut up, so we had to do the same. We left the *Gray Mare* (it looked quite white in the moonlight) in company with the still faithful, because unpaid boots, bearing a portmanteau in each hand. He dropped mine at my lodgings.

‘And now, Sir, where am I to take yours?’

‘That is the very question, boots, which you must decide for me,’ replied Gratemán; and he placed in his hand a couple of half-crowns.

As though electrically moved by contact with the precious metal, this faithful retainer cried; ‘Lor’, Sir, I have it; and I might have had it an hour ago.’ He was not referring to the money. He had really an idea. ‘You shall sleep in a first-class carriage at the railway-station, Sir. I know the night-porter, Sir; and he will call you in the morning, and bring you your hot water just as snug as though you were with us. It’s not at all unusual, when the town’s chokeful, as it is now, I do assure you,’

Gratemán’s features expressed no surprise, for he was so dead beat that he could have slept anywhere; and he confessed to me afterwards that he had had thoughts of a bathing-machine, numbers of which we had passed drawn up in a field, like a herd of amphibious beasts, awaiting the arrival of the summer season. But, in his helpless condition, I could not but see him safely housed, or rather carried. The night porter seemed pleased to have a guest, and placing a board between the opposite seats, and putting a cushion upon it, made up a tolerable *extempore* bed in a couple of minutes. Instead of bed-clothes, my friend had our two railway rugs; and altogether, if it was not luxurious accommodation, it was better than being ‘lodged’ like corn, by the wind and rain, which might have happened to him.

‘I shall have to call you early, Sir,’ said his chamberlain with a grin, ‘because this carriage goes with the early parliamentary to London;’ and so we left him, already half asleep, with his gout and his railway rugs flying about him.

Perhaps you will think me unfeeling and sardonic in the above description of my friend’s sleeping arrangements; but when you have read what happened to *me* that night, you will perceive that I have reason to be envious of Gratemán, and therefore unsympathising. His rest was destined to be Sardanapalitan compared to

mine. I make no reflection on the bed, which was ~~soft~~, nor on its furniture, which was clean, nor on the apartment itself, which the boots had with so much diligent toil secured for me. I will even allow that Mrs. Binks, the landlady, was not only buxom, but kindly, and not at all 'put out' by my exceedingly late arrival; and yet it was something in her appearance that first gave me the notion that all was not right in No. 4, Paradise Gardens. 'I *hope* you will be comfortable, Sir,' said she fervently, when she wished me good-night; but there was that in her tone which seemed to add, 'although I shall be uncommonly surprised if you are.'

But the room, as I have said, was a comfortable room enough, on the ground-floor, and communicating by folding-doors with the little dining-room, in the grate of which a cheerful fire was burning; and I felt thankful for warmth and shelter, and not disposed to entertain suspicions and forebodings. I disrobed myself with deliberation, and sat in my dressing-gown smoking a pipe or two, and reading in the *Metaphysical Magazine* one of my own articles, which is the very pleasantest sort of reading I know, until one o'clock, and then with a nod of satisfaction, and the confidential remark, What an uncommonly intelligent writer this is! I got into bed, and fell asleep in a moment: nothing but the extraordinary merit of the literature could have kept me awake so long.

I don't know how many hours or minutes I had been asleep, but something suddenly roused me to acute consciousness; there was no touch, no sound; but 'that wonderful sense of human companionship which strikes through sleep and trance, and maybe even death itself,* warned me that there was another person in the room; another 'sympathetic member of the great United Family of Man,* unless, indeed (which delicacy forbade me to imagine) it was a lady. As I gazed with straining eyes before me, the blackness of night faded into gloom, and in the gloom I saw a misty figure standing by the chest

* Something of this sort was in the article above referred to; and I cannot resist the temptation of a quotation or two. Authors will easily forgive me; and the general public cannot but be the better for it.

of drawers on which I had placed my watch and money.

'Who are you?' cried I, in a terrible voice (for fear is a thing unknown to me!)

There was no reply. I repeated my enquiry in still more determined accents, and then a tremulous voice answered: 'Oh, Sir, don't 'ee tell Mr. Binks; but I am Mrs. Binks.'

Can you imagine anything more embarrassing than my position? 'The mind, stored with historical incidents, rushes with lightning speed over the past,'* but finds no parallel to my awful position later than that of the esteemed patriarch Joseph. 'Oh, don't 'ee, don't 'ee tell Mr. Binks,' repeated the quavering tones, and this time they were so very tremulous that I felt that not even a misplaced infatuation for myself could have so transformed my landlady's straightforward if somewhat melancholy speech. It was certainly not the Mrs. Binks whom I had seen who thus addressed me.

'Wicked woman!' cried I, 'who are you?'

'Oh Sir, don't 'ee tell Mr. Binks, but I am Mrs. Binks.'

'You old Poll parrot,' said I, angrily (for I now perceived that her voice was cracked with age), 'leave this room immediately, or I will send for the police.'

'I'll go and sit in the parlour, Sir,' responded she meekly, and she opened one of the folding-doors and closed it behind her. As she did so, the light from the embers, which were still glowing, disclosed to me an ancient female, nearer a hundred than any other round number, and with a head that shook not so much with the palsy of age, as with that of mental imbecility. It was plain to me at once that my untimely visitor had survived her wits. Poor old lady! I repented already of having spoken to her so harshly; but I also regretted that there was no lock to my door. However, overcome with fatigue, I placed a heavy chair against the door of communication, which opened inwards, and fell once more into a sound sleep. The unwilling movement of this obstacle over the carpet awoke me at dawn. The ancient female, tired of her own company, was evidently

again about to present herself; and she did so. Daylight became her, poor soul, even less than firelight. She looked more than a hundred now, and if I might compare the human form divine with that of the feathered creation, she bore a most extraordinary resemblance to a moulting cockatoo.

‘My good lady,’ said I, in a tone (I hope) of gentlemanly remonstrance, ‘this sort of thing will not do. If *you* can go without sleep, *I* can’t. What *are* you coming here for, and what *does* it all mean?’

‘Oh Sir, don’t ’ee tell——’

‘Yes, I will,’ cried I, sharply; ‘I’ll tell Mr. Binks. If you don’t leave my room *instantly*, and promise never to enter it again, I’ll tell Binks as sure as your name’s whatever it is.’

But long before I had concluded this fortunately imagined menace, the poor lost creature had taken herself off in alarm, and I heard her stockinged feet slide along the passage, and go wearily down the kitchen stairs.

But I could not get to sleep again, and might for that matter just as well have passed the night in the small omnibus. I lay long, however, and rose to a late breakfast, so that it much surprised me not to see Grateman, whom circumstances, I knew, must have compelled to rise hours before, and who had promised to be with me at that meal. When I told the waiting-maid what had happened to me, she did not seem at all surprised.

‘That’s master’s mother,’ explained she. ‘Being quite mad, she is put to sleep in the back-kitchen, only sometimes she goes wandering over the house at night like a bad sperrit. Lodgers, like yourself, don’t like it; and that’s why this house is always the last in Sandcliff to be let.’

‘But, poor thing,’ said I, ‘if she is mad, why be angry with her?’

‘She aint more mad than she is wicked, Sir,’ responded the abigail darkly: then added, with intense unction, ‘Drat her!’

I saw that there was mystery enough in No. 4 Paradise Gardens to account for any amount of melancholy in

Mrs. Binks the younger ; that she was more unfortunate in her mother-in-law even than most people, was abundantly clear ; but not being a commissioner in lunacy, I did not venture to push my enquiries. Besides, there was pressing matter for my attention in the absence of Grateman. What *could* have become of him ? True, the morning was beautiful, and might well have tempted him for a stroll, but not with those tender feet of his, for a four hours' walk, unless the 'complete change' had already altered my friend beyond all recognition. At ten o'clock I started for the railway station, still expecting to meet him at every turn of the road ; on my arrival at the terminus, I found the night-porter had gone home for the day, and that nobody new anything about Grateman. The station-master derided the idea that anybody could have been accommodated with a bed in a first-class carriage, and delicately insinuated that I was one of those who rise early in the morning to follow strong drinks.

I gave him my card to let him know that he was dealing with a public character ; and he grew very respectful at once. 'There's a telegram just come for you, Sir,' said he ; 'only we didn't know your address, although, of course, we are well acquainted with your *name*.'


This was pleasant of the man, and I nodded affably. The telegram was from Grateman, and ran as follows : 'I am at home again. That infernal rascal forgot to call me, and I never woke till the train arrived at London Bridge. A very impudent letter from that fellow Surpliss, who "pays no attention to telegrams during the Easter season." Gout flying about me worse than ever ; I never mean to go to Sandcliff again.'

As for myself, I don't go so far as to say that ; but if I do ever visit Sandcliff, I shall—until I receive some trustworthy intimation of the decease of Mrs. Binks the elder—avoid No. 4, Paradise Gardens, where the boots engaged for me My Last Lodgings.



THE DEMON FERRY-BOAT.

A STORY OF THE THAMES.

F all the pleasures which have kept their ground in the affections of the children of men, from the days when the waters were separated from the dry land until now, there is surely nothing to which so much credit is due for the tenacity of its hold on public favour, as the pastime of fishing. For other pleasures may be fleeting, perhaps, and empty, and a number of other deprecatory adjectives (for which, see the Moralists *passim*), but still they are not so utterly disappointing, so certain to result in complete and inglorious failure, so delusive even in the modest joys which they profess to bestow, as is this insidious sport. If Noah himself ever angled out of the windows of the Ark, you may depend upon it, not only that he caught little or nothing, but that he invented some charitable excuse for his want of success—most probably that ‘there was too much water for bottom-fishing.’

The occupation of the professional fisherman—by which I mean the man who persuades amateurs to go out with him in his smack to that ‘likely’ piece of blue water off the headland, or in his punt to ‘that there sand-bank,’ which is also, if you are to believe his word, a gudgeon-shoal—I say the occupation of this deceiver, whether he be salt or fresh, would have gone long since, but for some benevolent arrangement (a monopoly instituted by Nature for his sole behoof,) through which mankind is rendered

blind to his shallow arts, and the experience of his perfidy profits us nothing. This is the only explanation that can be given of the fanaticism which prompts otherwise humane persons to pay ten-and-sixpence a day to watch this amphibious rascal impale lobworms or live minnows (as the case may be) on to their hooks, with the expectation (scarcely ever realised) that these creatures may, by their dying agonies, attract fish to the same dreadful doom. Nay, this gross favouritism of Dame Nature is carried still further; fishermen are almost always made to appear more mild and harmless than any other class of their fellow-creatures; they are neither voracious (being quite content with bread and cheese and beer, if 'the party' has brought nothing else out with him), nor exacting in their charges—like cabmen and others who keep land-carriages; so that we naturally 'cotton' to them, as the phrase goes, and put a confidence in their assurances, which might be reposed to about as much advantage in American securities. I protest I would as soon expect to receive the full value of a greenback in hard cash, as to see the word of a fisherman literally kept with respect to either the quality or the quantity of any probable capture. Yet so positive are they beforehand, that no person of ordinary humility dares question the matter; and after the result has proved them fallible, they are so furnished with arguments to account for the unprecedented failure, that it is impossible to abuse them as one would wish.

The salt-water angling imposture is worse than that of the river, inasmuch as to the pangs of disappointment are added the perils of the deep, and the unspeakable horrors of sea-sickness. How often have I sat at anchor off that 'likely' headland, while the tide was coming in, or while it was running out, or while it was neither one nor t' other, but 'slack,' with my miserable head hanging over the vessel's side, and a line with three hooks at the end of it—like the arms (which are legs) of the Isle of Man—in my sodden and nerveless hand!

Upon my way to that promising anchorage, I have been beset with terrors of a watery grave, of being cut in twain by steamers, or driven out to sea and swamped by the

ever rising gale ; but now I have lost all fear and almost all feeling.

‘Just touch the line with your forefinger, Sir ; it’s ten to one but you will bring up summut now,’ observes the insidious boatman. ‘Shall I put you on another lob-worm?’

‘No, no, no,’ I say ; ‘take away that horrid object. Why did you tell me that we should feel no motion out here? I have been two hours in this wretched state, and not had so much as a bite.’

‘Well, it’s curious now,’ returns the deceiver, with quite a philosophic air. ‘There was three gents came from London yesterday, and I brought ’em to this very spot, and it was as smooth here as the back of yer hand, bless yer ; and as for whitin’, why they couldn’t put their lines in fast enough. Now, I’ll be bound for it, if you’ll come here to-morrow ——’

I interrupt him with a shudder. ‘Very likely, my good man ; it is exceedingly probable ; but in the meantime, let us go home to-day, and at once.’

I speak sarcastically, resolutely determined, while I retain my reason, never to come line-fishing again ; yet within a week, or a month at most, of that detestable experience, I once more become the victim of some designing mariner, and am terrified, and made very unwell, and catch nothing whatever—all over again. And so it is with respect to river-fishing ; the peril and the pains indeed are wanting, but, on the other hand, the failure of success is much more frequent ; for though we are not all, thank Heaven ! within easy reach of the deep-sea fisheries, most of us are within a few hours’ walk of some river ; and when we are not—such is the fascinating character of this hopeless pursuit—we are generally induced to drive thither for at least one day’s fishing.

Let me recall the incidents of my last piscatorial expedition ; I do not say by way of warning, since warning is altogether thrown away upon the devotees of this pastime, who literally kiss the rod that corrects them, but because it presents some features which are not to be found (I fancy) in all other narratives of the like kind.

In the first place, Nature had been good enough to remove our place of abode as far as possible from all temptation to go a-fishing, there being neither stream nor lake within driving distance, and the river Thames happily separated from us by many miles of downland, without any visible road. Yet such is the marvellous attraction of this hateful sport, that four of us last week decided upon overweighting a dog-cart, and making an expedition across these desolate wilds in quest of gudgeon. I have said that there were no roads, but I do not mean it to be inferred that there were therefore no ruts; far from it. I don't know whether those in front or behind were most to be pitied. Those who sat in front suffered more protracted agonies of terror in the contemplation of the shock to come; but those behind endured more physical pain, being taken unprepared, and shot out (when they did fall) with considerable violence. Moreover, although there were handposts, there was nothing left of them *except* the posts, the fingers having been broken off by time or tempest. Once only did we come upon a legible direction. Long before we got up to it, we could see that the thing was unmutilated, and rejoiced thereat not a little; for we had gone astray already two or three times, being enticed by cottages where we hoped to obtain information, but which we always found entirely unoccupied, it being harvest-time; and once we went three hundred yards out of our way to enquire of a very cunningly-contrived scarecrow, keeping guard over a wheat-field in a manner to deceive not only birds but men. Conceive, then, our disappointment to read, neatly engraved upon this finger-post—for which we had made at a good pace, and with the highest expectations—the worse than meaningless words *No Thoroughfare*. Our horse, too, perhaps with a superstitious idea of procuring better luck—here cast a shoe, and we had to walk for the rest of the journey whether we took right ways or wrong. At last, we reached Mildred-on-Thames.

Now, among the other peculiarities of the pastime of fishing, there is this one, that in the preparations beforehand, the most essential matters, as in the case of a pic-

nic, are almost always left behind. If you bring rods enough, you don't bring lines; and if you bring lines, there are no hooks; and if even all these things are as they should be, two hours are wasted in procuring worms, which, after all (as we are subsequently informed by the deceiver), are the cause of our total failure to catch anything. 'Lor bless ye, they won't bite nothin' just now but gentles.'*

Now, upon this occasion, we had been assured that it was wholly unnecessary to bring any instruments of pisci-capture with us to Mildred, since such articles were supplied in profusion at the *Beetle and Wedge*, which also was the ferryhouse—a pleasant little place, as all river-inns are, quite overgrown with flowering creepers, and with a tiny garden sloping down to the water-side. However, when we drove up to this fairy residence, and perceived no vestige of any punts or pleasure-boats, flopping idly against the little wooden jetty, I observed to the landlord, not without some apprehension: 'You have lots of boats, of course?'

'Not one, Sir; nor yet half a one' (as if we should have gone out in *that*). 'They are all engaged—unless, indeed, you would like to take the ferry-boat.'

He pointed to a mass of timber about fifty feet long by thirty wide, used for the transit of heavy vehicles. It was just such a sort of raft as the elephants of the ancients used to be persuaded to step upon, under the impression that it was dry land; in modern times it could have had no parallel save in the Floating Bridge at Portsmouth. The idea of navigation seemed to be altogether out of the question.

'At least,' said I, 'we can fish from the land; you have plenty of rods and lines, I suppose?'

'Not a rod and line to be got in the place, Sir,' responded the landlord decisively.

'This is charming,' observed I, with the hollow laugh of despair. 'You will tell us next that there is not a

* The deceiver always 'blesses' us, a certain sort of saintliness and conciliation being generally kneaded up with his roguery—like-ground-bait.

blacksmith — for we've cast a shoe — to be found in Mildred.'

'Nor more there aint,' returned the landlord seriously; 'but there's one over in Oxfordshire yonder'—he pointed across the river to some unseen spot a little short of the horizon—'and we can send the ferry over for he.'

They sent the ferry for he accordingly—and a wonderful sight it was to see it go—and the messenger returned (after an interval which we consumed in lunch), not only with the blacksmith, but with a fisherman and the implements of his trade. They were not good implements, the rods having rheumatism in their joints, and the lines being rather rotten; moreover, the fisherman was the oldest man that ever bobbed for gudgeon, and had forgotten everything connected with his trade—save how to deceive. However, in our extreme desolation, we were glad to get him. Nothing could be more convenient, he said, than to go a-fishing in the ferry-boat itself, which might be punted by a single man, who understood the business, with ease. As I was a married man, I considered myself disqualified to compete for this privilege; but my three friends did manage, among them, by means of an enormous pole tipped with iron, to persuade the thing to move. We made our way up-stream, lest otherwise we should suffer ourselves to be carried with the tide beyond recovery. After a majestic progress, at the rate of a yard a minute, of about fifty yards, this Ancient Fisherman discovered that we had no anchor on board, nor any other means of mooring the machine; whereupon we returned to the inn, and borrowed of the hostess a little ornament used for measuring coal, and weighing exactly one hundredweight, of which she begged us to take especial care. Having procured an iron chain to match this pretty trinket, we fastened them together very securely, and having arrived at the spot indicated as being the best upon the river, we managed by our united exertions to hoist the thing overboard. This would doubtless have anchored us well enough, but for the incompleteness of our preliminary arrangements. A chain, say the mathematicians, is only as strong as its

weakest link ; and if the strongest chain in the world is not fastened to that which it is intended to retain, it will not retain it. Now this was unhappily the case with our anchor and cable. They were securely enough connected with one another, but not with the ferry-boat ; and at this moment they repose together at the bottom of the river, and doubtless give a chalybeate flavour to all Thames water between them and the sea.

After this misfortune we dared not return to the *Beetle and Wedge*, but fastened our raft to the bank, whereby we found (rather to our mortification) that we could command identically the same waters after which we had been striving so long, and at so tremendous a sacrifice. It is unnecessary to relate the details of our complete failure to capture fish in the most likely spot on the river ; one of our party did catch one perch of a deep yellow colour, and which I would not have eaten for a good deal of money ; but after about three hours of it, we paid our ancient mariner, and bade him go his way, murmuring that no fish ever did bite before evening, and promising us more gudgeons than we could carry if we would only persevere until nightfall.

Relieved of this incubus, and of the one hundredweight and chain, our raft moved less majestically up stream, by villa and church, by osier bed and shallow, under bridges over which the train flew thundering, while the martins peeped forth secure from their mud-nests between arch and parapet ; meeting many a pleasure-boat, and especially one fitted up for a river-voyage, with an extempore cabin, wherein we could see the preparations for a banquet, and ladies employed in deftly mixing salad and making claret cup—both excellent arts in women : then up a back-stream, paved with water-lilies, and lit with glancing dragon-flies, to a solitary weir head, where was deep water and shade—a bathing-place of nature's own. Now, while my young friends clove the stream with skilful arms, it struck me, remaining in the huge ferry-boat, with nothing but their clothes for company, that I would gather water-lilies, to gladden the eyes of the dear ones left at home. Engaged, then, in this poetical occupation, I did

not observe the flowery banks gliding quietly by me, and the rushes nodding their mute adieu, till a sudden cry arose from one of the bathers: 'Take care you don't get swept away by the stream!' In an instant I had seized the gigantic punt-pole—a 'weaver's beam' tipped with iron—and thrust it with all my force into the stream. It did its office to the extent of sticking there well enough; but as for holding the ferry-boat also, that was altogether another matter. I held on as long as I could; but since the question at once became, whether I should stay in the slowly-separating boat, or remain in mid-stream along with the punt-pole, I adopted the former alternative. The cry of agony with which my three unclothed friends greeted this misfortune, still rings in my ears. 'Throw our things on shore, for Heaven's sake!' shrieked one. Alas, he had more presence of mind than I had. I dashed at the nearest heap of clothes, and threw the first article of apparel towards the receding bank as hard as I could. I watched its fate with enthralling interest; it fell short, but was caught by a willow branch, and there most happily it hung. But, after all, how insufficient was such an article for three persons who had not a rag of clothing among them. It was only a summer scarf, of the sort that is called *Dundreary*, and not a button to fasten it to among them all! I cannot imagine any position more embarrassing than that in which those three young gentlemen were placed except my own.

This had by this time began to engage my whole attention. I was, of course, perfectly powerless to guide as to arrest my unwieldy craft, which, having already gained the main stream, was now floating down at a pace which I could not have believed possible, from its performances in the other direction. I had once been witness of a dreadful accident to one of those huge timber-rafts upon the Rhine, which, becoming unmanageable, ran against the great bridge of boats at Coblenz, and broke it up, and drowned half a score of passengers; but the bridge which I was now approaching was *not* one of timber, but of bricks and mortar; and if there should be a concussion, it would not be *it*, but my raft which would go to pieces.

I ran up and down my floating prison like a caged jackal ; I shouted to some people in a neighbouring harvest-field, who shouted back again ' Good-night ! good-night ! ' under the idea that I, on my part, had only uttered that little civility. In another moment the machine struck the buttress of the centre arch, and whirled round with hideous velocity : my vessel was too strong to suffer serious damage ; but from the moment of its receiving this rotary impulse, it proceeded by huge circles, making me giddy, although I sat in the very centre of the machine. The punts and pleasure-boats scuttled away to left and right at my approach, like dace when a jack bears down upon them, and in reply to my calls for aid, I was saluted with nothing but menaces and imprecations. I supposed they thought that I was a rich man voyaging alone by my own desire, and with three changes of raiment. At the ferry, popular indignation seemed to be at its height, for since we had taken the passage-boat, nobody could get across from Berks to Oxfordshire, or *vice versâ* ; and there was a howling crowd of expectant passengers upon both banks. I am sure I would very gladly have stopped at either, but the remorseless machine whirled on past its usual resting-place with unabated speed. And now, a most awful catastrophe awaited me and my demon craft. The pleasure-boat with the deck-cabin which I have already spoken of, lay right before me, *moored* in the centre of the stream. It was so ingeniously fastened there, that it would have taken at least a quarter of an hour to unloose it, and lo ! I was revolving within two minutes of it at furthest, bringing with me inevitable destruction. The happy inmates were at present in total ignorance of what was about to happen. I could hear the popping of a champagne cork, and the silver laughter of youth, as I drew nigh. The wind being my way, I could smell the very pickled salmon and cucumber, and the Chili vinegar, which had (very properly) been mixed with the salad. My mouth (which would otherwise have watered at these preparations) was dry and voiceless ; I could not speak for terror, but I threw up both my arms like a mad semaphore. Fortunately, one of them caught sight of me, and


instantly all hurried to the bows. In another second, crash, splinter, smash. Total unconsciousness supervened.

When I came to myself, I found myself in the hands of two of the rural constabulary, who were disputing as to whether the offence—running down with damage, but without loss of life—had been committed in Oxfordshire or Berks. However, I was glad to find myself on dry land under any circumstances whatever. All misfortunes, no matter how frightful, are settled sooner or later, and the four of us returned home (later), safe and sound and clothed, in our dog-cart that same evening, after all. It has even been already darkly suggested that we should try another day's fishing.





DICK'S LEGACY.

 F were a large family, and it was only to be expected that one of us should have insisted upon going to sea. My father said he would as soon have seen Dick go to the dogs at once, but we all knew he didn't mean that. He only meant it was very hard that his favourite son, and the child of his old age, should not be content to earn his living at home, or at least in his own country, but must betake himself to lands which the rest of us had only read of in the geography books. We lived in London, and within a very easy distance of the Thames—indeed, our street led into it—but nothing would do but Dick must sail to Spain and see the Guadalquivir—a name that sounds like an alligator *in extremis*. Our Dick cared nothing for foreign scenery, had no thirst for information of any kind, didn't care whether the climate was warm or cold, hadn't the slightest knowledge of any tongue but his own (and *that* he knew very imperfectly), had no sympathy with Columbus or Captain Cook—and yet he must be always going to sea. Going to see *what?* his father used to enquire peevishly; and poor Dick never could answer him, for he didn't know himself. He always pined to be off somewhere, to Kamtchatka, or Mozambique, or Jericho, after he had been at home about three weeks or so. Spain not having been enough for him, he ran over to Canada;

then he took a trip to Hong-kong ; and finally went to the West Indies—from whence the dear light-hearted vagabond never returned.

Yellow Jack laid him low at Berbice, and many an eye was touched with tears when the news came over the sea. It sent a spasm to his father's heart from which it never recovered. For this Ne'er-do-well, who was no Scape-grace, however, was liked by everybody who knew him. He was very poor, of course, being only a common seaman before the mast, at best ; but he had kept all his friends in his memory wheresoever he went, and brought home some trifle from every outlandish place he visited, for one or other of them. He was not a man for a woman to marry—unless she was prepared to embrace the nautical profession as well as himself—but he was an immense favourite with all the sex ; and as for children, they adored him, and called him Uncle Dick whether authorised by the tables of affinity so to do, or not. His last present, a posthumous one, brought over by a messmate to my wife, with 'her Brother Dick's best love'—kind simple soul that he was!—was a huge black parrot, the very ugliest bird that these eyes ever beheld. Lucy, however, welcomed it as though it had been a bird of paradise, for the sake of the giver ; and father could hardly be persuaded not to have it in his room, when he lay ill of the sickness which at last was unto death. But the fact was the black parrot was by no means a suitable bird for a sick-room ; for at most unexpected seasons, and commonly in the dead of night, it would begin to talk as loud as a washer-woman, and use the most reprehensible language, which it had picked up at sea—upon its return-voyage, as my wife always would have it, and by no means from Dick's lips. 'Pooh, pooh !' 'Never say die !' 'What's o'clock ? past kissing-time—chick, chick—and time to kiss again—chick, chick !' [That was his imitation of osculation.] 'Tolderol, tolderol !!' 'Who's afraid ?' 'Kill the captain !' 'Scuttle the ship !'—and a number of other objectionable statements, which would be not only tedious here to enumerate, but even improper. Notwithstanding this, Poll was a great pet with everybody (except the doctor,

whom it had objugated in the most unmeasured terms, having mistaken him, in his white cravat, for the ship's chaplain), and when misfortune came upon us, in the pleasant guise, however, of a family too large for our income, Poll and his huge gilt cage still formed a portion of our furniture, although many persons with more brain than heart thought it a piece of folly that we did not turn Dick's loving legacy into hard money. The only inconvenience Poll suffered in consequence of this change in our circumstances, was that, being greatly crowded within doors, we hung him outside the house in the summer-time, in which position he endured much wordy persecution from the street-boys. To these he would return insult for insult, teaching them the badinage used by mariners, and learning in return the flowers of speech that flourish in the streets of the metropolis. His jet-black plumage, his enormous beak, and the unprecedented (for a parrot) violence of his expressions, induced these enemies to call him Nick; but very fortunately his ear was not sufficiently acute to discern the difference between this contemptuous name, and Dick, which we had entitled him, after him who had bequeathed him to us.

But 'Never you mind,' my good father would observe to us, with general reference to all these drawbacks; 'that bird will prove a blessing to you yet, or my dear boy would never have sent it to you with his last breath across the seas.'

And so, long after my poor father died, and when many of our children had grown up and were earning their own living, the parrot was with us still, without one touch of gray upon a feather.

We were outfitting Jack, our youngest but one, for a situation as under-clerk in a colliery down in Wales, and had had no little trouble to raise the money for that and his long journey, when Dick first brought us luck.

'My dear George,' said my wife to me one June evening, just after I had come home from a long day's work, 'if fifteen guineas would be a very great comfort to you indeed, I know where to get them.'

Her voice was not so cheery as her words, and there-

fore I knew there was a reverse side to such a gratifying offer.

'Well,' said I, 'and what's to be done for that money? It would be a great convenience, Lucy, no doubt, just now.'

'That's true,' returned my wife with a little sigh. 'But we are not so poor as to be obliged to sell poor Dick even for that sum; and it is for him that the money has been bid. If any of the children were ill, and wanted expensive medicines, or change of air, I should not hesitate about it; but since we have cut, and contrived, and scraped together enough to start our Jack, I think we should not be justified, eh, George——'

My wife spoke with indecision, but she would secretly have been much disappointed in me, if I had leaned towards selling the bird, I knew; so I replied that that must not be thought of—certainly not—and enquired, merely as a matter of curiosity, how the offer happened to be made.

'Well,' said my wife, 'Sally called me down stairs this afternoon, as I was taking a last look to Jack's clothes, and especially to his buttons, poor lad—for it is not likely that any Welshwoman will understand such things—and who should be in the parlour but a female in widow's clothes, sitting at our table with the parrot before her, like a poor savage worshipping an idol. She had taken it down from its hook outside, and carried it in, notwithstanding that it had sworn at her in a manner dreadful to listen to, and was even then far from pacified.'

"Madam, I beg your pardon," exclaimed the visitor; "but this parrot is the most admirable bird——"

"Pooh, pooh!" cried Dick.

"Its sagacity," pursued the widow, "is beyond all belief. Now, I dote upon parrots, especially black ones, that having been my beloved husband's favourite colour. And if I could only get possession of this admirable creature——"

"Kill the captain!—scuttle the ship!" screamed Dick.

"By paying any compensation in reason, I should consider myself truly fortunate. Of course, I'm taking a

great liberty. I have no right to come into your house and open a negotiation of this kind—I am fully aware of the false position in which I have placed myself—still, a voice from beyond the tomb seems to have whispered to me——”

“Tolderolol!” exclaimed Dick, performing a succession of somersaults within his gilded ring. “Who’s your hatter? How’s your poor feet?”

“Seems to have whispered,” repeated the widow, calmly waiting until the bird had finished its remarks: ‘Buy that parrot; buy it, cage and all. Take it home, and treat it kindly.’ It is impossible for me, Madam, to neglect such a solemn intimation of the wishes of the departed. Five pounds for the bird, and two ten for the cage, is an offer which I think you will allow is handsome, and ought to be conclusive.” And with these words she took out her purse, and laid down the money on the table.

“I confess, George, that the sight of so much gold was not a little tempting; but after just one look at it, I thanked her, and bade her put it back again, for that with us also the matter was one of feeling and memory, and that we could not part with Dick upon any such consideration.

“Ten for the bird, and five for the cage,” observed the visitor with quiet distinctness, and doubling the sum already spread before me. I hesitated a moment, fairly fascinated by the glitter of all this treasure. I thought of a score of things that it would buy for you and the children, and did not know what to do.

“Poor Dick, poor Dick, poor Dick!” reiterated the parrot mournfully. “Give him a dozen, keel-haul him, throw him overboard!”

“Madam,” cried I, “I cannot sell that bird; so, please, do not tempt me any further.”

‘Well, Lucy, and you did quite right,’ quoth I, kissing away a tear that lay upon her honest cheek. ‘And then I suppose the temptress took herself off?’

‘No,’ returned my wife, ‘she did not; and here comes the strangest part of the story, and that which may have

most interest for you and me. "Well, if you won't sell your parrot," said the widow, in the same determined way as before, and without any appearance of disappointment, "will you *lend* it to me for a week in August next? I will give you ten guineas for the loan of it."

'*Lend* it, Lucy!'

'That is certainly what she said, George; and I replied that I would speak to you, and if she would call to-morrow, at ten o'clock, let her know to what decision you had come.'

At first, I thought this offer could not have proceeded from any but a madwoman, and made up my mind to refuse her request. She might do some harm to our parrot, and possibly even eat it; in which case, the law itself could afford us no redress. But, on second thoughts, I determined to see the woman myself, before rejecting so favourable a proposition. Accordingly, I delayed going to my usual place of business the next day until after the hour named by the mysterious visitor. As the clock struck ten, she rang the door-bell, and telling Sally not to be in a hurry in opening it, I made a recognizance through the parlour blind.

The widow's cap framed a quiet resolute face, and hard blue eyes, that certainly exhibited no trace of insanity; her voice, as she spoke to the servant, was calm and collected; her garments were new and of good material. If appearances were to be trusted, she was not mad, and she was solvent—the two points about which I had naturally the greatest solicitude.

'Mr. Wilson, I conclude?' observed she, as she entered the parlour. 'I am glad that I see you in person, so that there need be no more uncertainty about this little affair. I offered your wife ten guineas for the loan of your black parrot from the 6th to the 13th of August. I think that is a handsome week's rent for any bird.'

'Madam,' returned I, 'that is undoubtedly true; still, the proposition is such a very uncommon one, that you must pardon my hesitation in acceding to it. How do I know——'

'If you require references as guarantees of my respecta-

bility,' interrupted the widow, 'you may have a bushel of them. My name is Hubble, I live at 884, Pitt Street. I was housekeeper to the late General Sir Fiddle Faddle for twenty years; and my bankers are the Messrs. Child. If you are merely curious to know why I want your parrot, that curiosity will not be gratified. Don't be a fool, now. I am prepared to pay five guineas at once, on deposit, and in advance, to convince you that my intentions are in good faith. What would you have more?'

'Nothing more, indeed,' said I, taking up the money. 'I am perfectly satisfied. But supposing that in the interim the poor parrot should——'

'Never say die!' exclaimed Dick from his cage without. 'Who's afraid? Chick, chick, chick, chick, chick!'

I could not help laughing heartily at this apropos interruption, but the widow never moved a muscle. 'If it dies, you may keep the deposit. It is hard,' added she with a sort of spasm, 'that poor folks should be disappointed in their expectations, through no fault of their own; but as for their giving money back again, I think nobody ought to expect it. I have nothing further to remark except that the whole arrangement is to be kept a dead secret. That may seem very whimsical perhaps, but then I am prepared to pay for my whims. It will be better that one of you two should both bring Dick to Pitt Street, and take him away again, and for this trouble, you shall have a guinea extra.' She rose to leave the room, but while I held the door open for her, she suddenly observed: 'By-the-bye, I don't like the name of Dick; it's vulgar. Have you any nice little boy at home who has nothing particular to do, and will teach the parrot to speak of himself as "Poor Tommy, Poor Tommy?" It is very easily done, and here is a little present for his future tutor.'

She was gone in a moment, leaving in my wife's hand a half-sovereign wrapped up in silver-paper; and all my apprehensions as to the state of her mind returned to me immediately with redoubled force. 'She *must* be mad,' thought I, 'to scatter her gold about with such reckless

profusion, and to entertain the idea that Tommy is a more aristocratic name than Dick !'

Nevertheless, the method of her madness being far from objectionable, and her references turning out to be most satisfactory, everything was done in accordance with the widow's desire. Our youngest hope, incited by the magnitude of his reward, never ceased his monotonous task until the unfortunate bird was so far educated that if he did not substitute his new name for his old one, he at least used one as often as the other, and very often both in the same breath ; and when the 6th of August came, I took him in a cab to Pitt Street in a high state of exultation and strong language, and under the belief, as I think, that he was about to be shipped for the West Indies. On the 13th, I brought him back again as glossy and bright as ever, and with the sum of £6 6s. in my waistcoat pocket, as well as the price of the two cabs. Not a feather of him was missing ; he was as ugly, but not at all more so—which, indeed, was scarcely possible — than when he left us. What he had done to earn his hire, we could not possibly imagine. When we asked him, he answered ' Fiddle Faddle ;' a reply which at first quite terrified us by its sagacious novelty, but presently we remembered that that had been the name of the general whose housekeeper the widow had been, and set it down merely as a new acquisition to Dick's vocabulary. For fifteen years, I took that parrot to Pitt Street, and received the eleven guineas *per annum*, and although we suffered much—especially Lucy—from the pangs of ungratified curiosity, we had certainly cause to bless that sable bird. Our pecuniary connection with Mrs. Hubble did not make us in any degree more acquainted with her ; she received and dismissed me always with the same frigid politeness ; and when I met her by chance in the street, at other times, she made two stereotyped enquiries—first after Tommy's health, and secondly, after that of my wife.

In the sixteenth year after our first loan of the parrot, and in the month of July, we received a visit from two strange gentlemen, which was even more extraordinary in

its result than that of the mysterious widow. It took place upon a Saturday afternoon, when I was accustomed to leave my employer's house at an earlier hour than usual, so that I happened to be at home : had my wife been alone, she expresses her opinion that the interview would have been too much for her, and have cost her her reason.

As it was, her head—to use her own words—‘turned round like a teetotum,’ and ‘she saw sparks,’ which it seems is a premonitory sign of mental aberration.

And, judge now, whether, under the circumstances, this was to be wondered at.

These two gentlemen, being strangers, and attired in sober garments, having rung the bell, lifted down the parrot, whose cage as usual hung outside the ground-floor window, and brought it with them into the parlour.

‘You must excuse our freedom,’ observed the elder of the two, who had a stiff white cravat, and looked like a family lawyer ; ‘but Tommy is a very old friend of ours, and we have known him a great deal longer than you have.’

‘Indeed, gentlemen !’ said I. ‘Then that must have been in the West Indies.’

‘I knew him there intimately well,’ returned the second gentleman, who was tightly buttoned up, and carried his head high, like a military man. The general won him at piquet, of the lieutenant-governor of Barbadoes, having staked, upon his side, fifty guineas.’

‘And I don’t think he would have afterwards parted with him, major, for a thousand pounds,’ observed the other.

‘Dear me !’ said I. But I could not help thinking that he must have parted with him for a good deal less to my Brother Dick ; unless Dick stole him. This last idea so agitated me, that I did not catch quite clearly what was said for a minute or two.

‘The gentlemen want to know how it is that the parrot has forgotten the articles of war,’ exclaimed my wife, touching my elbow ; then added, in a terrified whisper : ‘For Heaven’s sake, get them out of the house, George ; they are both stark staring mad.’

'The articles of war!' said I; 'I never knew he had learned them. Dick, Dick, why did you never repeat the articles of war?'

'Pooh, pooh! Kill the captain!—scuttle the ship!' chuckled the parrot.

'Now, *that's* very extraordinary too,' remarked the military stranger. 'Where *could* he have picked up all that sea-slang? Sir Fiddle was so very particular. He kept him in his own cabin all the way home; and nobody under gun-room rank was allowed to associate with him.'

'Some young scamp of a midshipman must doubtless have done it on the sly,' returned the other. 'But may I ask, Mr. Wilson, why you call him Dick?'

'Because that's his name,' observed I simply. 'I have no other reason whatever.'

'But it's *not* his name,' remarked the white-cravated gentleman confidently. 'His name is Tommy, and has been such for these forty years; he is denominated Tommy in the codicil. I am sure Fiddle would have been very unhappy at the notion of his being called Dick. You must not encourage the bird in such senseless extravagances. The wishes of the departed should be consulted as though he were actually alive. We have nothing, however, to complain of in your custody of the bird, Mr. Wilson; quite the reverse. Indeed, poor Mrs. Hubble informed us that she knew of nobody to whom we could intrust the faithful creature with greater confidence; when we have called upon her by accident, and not at the specified time, we understood that you had poor Tommy in keeping for the benefit of his health; and certainly you always sent him back to Pitt Street in high feather. Now that Mrs. Hubble is dead—(Did you not hear of it? Yes, the sad event took place more than ten days ago)—we do not know anybody fitter than yourself to whom to transfer this sacred charge. We came here to-day merely to identify the bird. In future, we shall visit you every 12th of August—it was the general's whitest day in the year, major, and aptly chosen; even paradise can be hardly a more charming spot to him than was his Perthshire moor. We wish you a very good

morning, Mr. Wilson. Permit me to congratulate you upon this first instalment of what I trust may be a long annuity to you and yours.' He pressed an envelope into my hand, and then he and his starched companion took their deliberate departure. I watched them walking slowly up the street. They were evidently not in the least apprehensive of being followed and seized as madmen. One presently called a cab, and bade good-bye to the other in a studiously courteous manner, just as though they had been about some business, which brought them together periodically, and made them acquaintances, without their ever becoming intimate friends. In the meantime, my wife was within a sob or two of hysterics, while I remained standing with the envelope in my hand, and a crossed cheque inside of it for a hundred guineas, payable to myself or bearer!

Nothing out of the *Arabian Nights*, where purses of sequins are flung about with such reckless prodigality, was surely to be compared to this adventure.

'What's o'clock?' cried the parrot, astonished at the stupified silence into which his master had been plunged.

'Excellent bird,' returned I, 'your words are the words of wisdom. It is half-past two, and the Messrs. Child close at three o'clock; there is not a moment to lose.' I arrived at the banking-house in time to present the cheque; and it was cashed without the least hesitation. I took my way back with more money in my pocket than I had ever possessed there in my life. My possession of it was a little mysterious, certainly; but then, had not my father foretold that Dick's legacy would prove a blessing to us, and bade me mark his words. I was inclined to accept everything in the past and in the future with a grateful heart, that was not disposed for question or analysis. It was a saying of my revered parent, when our cousin, the brewer's clerk, used to send us a kilderkin of rather inferior ale at Christmas-time, that you should never look a gift-cask in the bung-hole. If I had found a queen's messenger waiting for me at home with a patent of nobility made out in the name of Wilson, by reason of my proprietorship in that incomparable black parrot, I think I should have

taken it as a matter of course. I did not, however, find a queen's messenger, but, on the contrary, a porter from Furnival's Inn, who had brought a letter with him, and declined to leave the house without seeing me ; the contents were as follow :—

‘DEAR SIR—I wholly forgot, when Major Mordax and myself called upon you this afternoon with the first instalment of your annuity, to ask for your signature to the enclosed receipt ; which please to sign, and return by bearer.

‘Yours truly,

‘NATHANIEL POUNCET.

The receipt was in the same envelope.

‘Received of Matthew Mordax, Esq., and Nathaniel Pouncet, Solicitor, executors of the late General Sir Fiddle Faddle, the sum of one hundred guineas, being the annual stipend left by the will of the said general for the maintenance of his black parrot Tommy.’

These dreadful words revealed at once the dark source of our prosperity, as the policeman's lantern flashes on the implements of the burglar. I accompanied the messenger at once to Furnival's Inn with the depressing consciousness that I had got to refund my little property. It seemed to be very hard and grievous that my vested rights, for such they already seemed, should be thus infringed. I at once, however, set forth every circumstance connected with the affair before Mr. Nathaniel Pouncet, and had the satisfaction of perceiving that I was at least believed. ‘You are not to blame in this affair at all, Mr. Wilson,’ said he ; ‘far from it. But for your honesty, it is likely enough we should have paid you a hundred guineas a year for life. The late Mrs. Hubble must have cheated us out of that amount for fifteen years—ever since she hired your parrot to represent the deceased favourite of the poor general. It was a housekeeper, too, I think, who kept a bishop alive, to all appearance, for six months after death, and drove something like him every day

through his own cathedral town, in order that she might receive the half-yearly revenue of his see. I really don't know which was the worse case ; except that in the bishop's '—here the lawyer smiled—' there seems to have been no necessity for a substitute, and therefore the fraud was rather more negative or passive. You will not, of course, have to repay those sums, Mr. Wilson, which this woman remitted to you upon false pretences, but which you did not, I am sure, suspect to be false. Of course, I must receive the one hundred guineas ; but we will communicate upon that subject with the general's heir-at-law, who will be glad to learn that this troublesome charge upon the estate no longer exists, and who has a heart to sympathise with your disappointment, as well as to appreciate your manly conduct.'

Finally, although my recompense for keeping my own parrot could not be entitled a Long Annuity, I received that refunded cheque for a hundred guineas 'in token of the esteem entertained by Francis Faddle, Esq.,' for my upright behaviour ; or, in other words, because I had not been so fraudulent as Mrs. Hubble. No wonder that she had been so anxious for our parrot's company between the 6th and 13th of August ! No wonder that she had thought Tommy a more becoming name for him than Dick ! What pleased my wife most of all in the whole transaction was, that she had so sturdily refused to part with the dear bird for good and all. 'What a rich reward has been given us for obeying the dictates of affection ! What ever *would* you have said, George, had I sold our Dick for fifteen guineas at once, instead of receiving more than two hundred and sixty for, as it were, the interest of our principal ?'

'Well, Lucy, I should have said that you had imitated that unsagacious housewife who killed her parrot for the sake of its golden eggs.'

'That was a goose, George,' remarked my wife a little stiffly.

'Fiddle, Faddle, what's the odds ?' screamed Dick.



THE SAVANT TRIUMPHANT.

AS a humble member of the *Float and Trimmer Club*, Twickenham-on-Thames, I wish to add my mite of evidence to the irrefutability of science, as exemplified in the person of its well-known disciple, Professor Vertebrey. I am anxious to do this, not only in justice to the professor, but also in expiation of much discredit of his theories entertained by me until quite lately, but whereof I am now become a trusting recipient. For, belonging to the same angling association with Vertebrey for many years, familiarity perhaps bred in me some contempt; and the more so, since, although I am myself far from a fortunate fisherman, he has never, within my experience, caught anything above half-a-pound weight, and even that in by no means a skilful manner. True, when a fish is once out of water, the professor knows the number of its bones, and where each ought to lie, within a hairbreadth; but in his method of securing it in its native element, he is more peculiar than successful. Sometimes he jerks his line so vehemently that the fish escapes with some fathoms of expensive line, and even occasionally with the top joint of the rod: and sometimes he whirls his finny prey above our heads, and lashes us with it unpleasantly, before it can be secured by the boatman appointed for that special purpose. In this under-estimation of the professor, I had an ally in Mr. Gideon Grubb,

a brother-member of our association, and one of our most killing rods. When this gentleman hears of a fish having been seen in this or that locality, from the Tweed to the Thames, he packs up his piscatorial weapons, and, just like a knight-errant of old, upon the news of a dragon or a giant, sallies forth, and slays the creature to a certainty. A score of other fishermen may be bent on the same achievement, but Mr. Grubb is invariably the captor, if he only arrives at the scene of action in time. I think he must have some secret like that of Mr. Rarey for the enticement and destruction of fish ; for although I may have been angling for hours without a bite, this man has only to throw a fly upon the very water which I have whipped in vain, and straightway he pulls some monster of the deep from its bosom, and asks contemptuously what sort of bait I have been fishing with.

As Mr. Grubb has no means of estimating the eminence of his fellow-creatures except with reference to their capabilities of killing fish, it is easy to imagine that he does not think much of Vertebrey, notwithstanding that his reputation is European ; nor, indeed, do I believe that he had any very high opinion of me until a certain Saturday of July last, when I happened to catch the heaviest fish of the day. I had never attained the proud distinction before, although I had striven for it for years, and of course I was proportionably elevated. The notion that I should be president of the club for that evening at our social repast—a dignity which my success conferred—filled me with a majestic serenity. I surveyed the creature which had procured me so honourable a post—although it was only a barbel—as though it had been a sturgeon-royal. I did not like other people—and especially Grubb—taking it up and weighing it in a depreciatory manner, as if the ordinary scales were not to be trusted ; I did not like the professor regarding it through his spectacles as though he could look into its inside. Conceive, then, my mortification when five out of our little company of nine began to make excuses for non-attendance at dinner, on account of various engagements in town ; for my part, I set it all down to simple jealousy

at my having at last attained a like distinction with themselves, for they had all been presidents at one time or another, except myself and the professor. I openly ascribed their behaviour to that low motive ; and when the remaining three observed that it was scarcely worth while to dine at the inn, as usual, with such diminished numbers, and that it would be better to go home, I observed, with ferocity, that the proposition was very agreeable to me, and that I did not care if I never dined with the *Float and Trimmer Club* again.

However, although greatly hurt and disappointed, I did not quite mean that ; and when they all allowed that 'it was very hard upon me,' and that 'I bore it like a trump' (which I didn't), my feelings were a little mollified. Grubb took advantage of this fact to beg for the barbel, since he had a few friends to dine with him that evening, to whom the fish would be, if not a delicacy, at least a novelty, and 'as it was such a very heavy one for the size.' I thought this harder than all, for I should have liked to have had that barbel stuffed and hung up in a glass-case, with a suitable inscription under it, in my drawing-room ; but I could not very well refuse so great a man, whose request, moreover, was itself a sort of compliment. I did not think, at the time, of the possible consequences that might flow from that generous act.

At the next weekly meeting of our club, at which, by-the-bye, I by no means caught the heaviest fish, a discussion arose with relation to that same gift-barbel, between Mr. Gideon Grubb and Professor Vertebrey, which threatened to terminate in blows. We were at dinner, and it began in this manner :

'I should not have thought that a barbel could ever have swallowed a jack,' observed Mr. Grubb, addressing the company in general.

'If you think so now,' returned the professor quietly, 'you had better return to your original belief. It can swallow nothing of the kind.'

'I do not *think*, but I am perfectly certain that it can,' answered Mr. Grubb angrily. 'You theorists are always

positive enough, but it is practical men who, after all, decide these matters, by the results of their own experience.'

'They are useful enough as handmaids to science,' returned Vertebrey calmly: 'but they have very crude notions of evidence.'

If Mr. Gideon Grubb was a handmaid, he was certainly not a prepossessing one, as he replied: 'It is a pity that science cannot teach people good-manners. I have only to say, Mr. Professor, that the barbel which Mr. Jones was so kind as to give me last Saturday, and for which I beg again to thank him,* had actually swallowed a young pike, for I saw it taken out of its stomach with my own eyes.'

'I can't swallow *that*,' answered the professor with determination. 'But, pray, don't be angry, Sir; I should not believe it even if I saw it myself.'

'Well, upon my word,' said Mr. Gideon Grubb, 'you learned gentlemen are at least honest in your stupid scepticism. You first make up your mind how things ought to be, and then remain blind and deaf for the rest of your lives.'

'Thank you very much,' returned the professor. 'I have rarely seen ignorance walking alone, but almost always hand-in-hand with insolence.'

Then up I rose, and with some hesitation, but not, I trust, altogether without dignity, delivered myself of the following observations:

'Mr. President, and gentlemen of the *Float and Trimmer Club*, I feel it incumbent upon me, however disagreeable to myself, to make an explanation concerning that piscatorial phenomenon—the swallowing of the pike by the barbel—which has bred this strife between two such distinguished members of our association as Mr. Grubb and the professor. They are both right, and yet both wrong, as in the case of the chameleon, with which—although that creature is not, strictly speaking, a fresh-

* It is Mr. Grubb's custom, when wrangling with anybody, and I dare say the reader has observed it in other quarrelsome men, to be extraordinarily civil to any third person who happens to be present.

water fish—we are most of us doubtless acquainted. The pike *was* found within the stomach of the barbel, and yet the barbel did not swallow the pike. Mr. Grubb's evidence is perfectly accurate, although not his deduction; and I cannot withhold my approbation from the determined manner in which the professor stuck to his conviction in spite of such irrefragable testimony. The fact is, gentlemen, that having been unsuccessful in catching the heaviest fish at our club meetings for a hundred-and-twenty weeks (exclusive of "fenced" months), I devised a laborious scheme for compelling Fortune to favour me. I know not what could have induced me to behave so unlike a scholar, a divine—for I am, as you know, a clergyman—and a member of the *Float and Trimmer Club*; but I rather imagine that it was the success of a similar unworthy stratagem which I once put into practice in my youth, and which, now that I am on my knees (figuratively speaking), I may as well confess also. At a certain reservoir-party, I once won a shilling sweepstakes (to be given to him who caught most fish) by dexterously putting back *the same dace* into the water—catching him over again no less than thirty-five times—making, in short, three dozen dace of that single capture. The remembrance of that master-stroke of knavery must, I think, have set me on to the scarcely less defensible stratagem of last week. Mr. President and gentlemen, having caught my small pike and my large barbel, I thought I would combine their advantages by stuffing the former down the throat of the latter, and thereby increasing its weight. I assure you, gentlemen, that it was not an easy task. With your knowledge of the formation of a barbel's throat, Mr. Professor, you may easily imagine what obstacles my endeavours met with, seconded, as they were, by such an inefficient ally as the second joint of my fishing-rod. I trembled when I saw your intelligent eye fixed upon that distended fish. I thought the very balance would have refused its office, and declined to chronicle so fraudulent a transaction. Although pronounced your chief, I was not a happy man. I shrunk at first from recording in

our records the fact of my having obtained the presidency by such illegitimate means: you may observe, although I did record it, that the handwriting is excessively shaky——'

I was not allowed to proceed further. Before tears choked my utterance, the club interfered, with a unanimous expression of forgiveness. Mr. Grubb declared that the temptation might fairly be said to be too great to be resisted by our mortal nature; while the professor protested that the triumph which science had thus obtained at my unwilling hands might easily atone for the slight peccadillo of putting a pike inside a barbel.





‘THE TWA DOGS.’

NEW VERSION.



PASS my life wholly in the country, with the exception of one week at Christmas-time, when my late husband's sister is so good as to receive me in Connaught Square. During these seven days, I seem to be in quite another state of existence, and everything strikes me as strange and novel that I see and hear. My hostess is a lady of fashion, and carries me about with her from scene to scene of gaiety, until I wake up one fine morning—for the mornings are seldom fine in London—and find myself once more in my quiet humble home in Sleepiton, like Cinderella after the ball. Nothing, however, impresses me more with the sense of contrast between town and country than the difference of treatment which that domestic pet, a house-dog, experiences in the two places. *I* have a little dog at home, who is as dear to me as any four-footed creature can be, and it is, I confess, with a pang of regret that I leave ‘Trim’ behind me when I start for the metropolis; but I no more fear for Trim's safety, when I am away, than I am apprehensive that my ancient cook, Rachel Harris, will be snatched away by an eagle, through having found too much favour in the eyes of mighty Jove. Now, in London, nobody can keep a pet—unless it's a poll-parrot in one's bed-room—with any certainty of retaining possession of it for twelve

consecutive hours. It need be neither beautiful nor rare, to excite cupidity ; but only let it be known that it is a pet, and you become liable to have it stolen from under your very eyes, for the sake of the subsequent 'salvage'—the reward. That is one reason, among a thousand others, why Trim and I will never become Cockneys. My sister-in-law, Miss Adela Brabazon, has a crumpled rose-leaf of this sort in her otherwise pleasant life-pillow—a pet-dog of which she is liable to be robbed. 'Liable,' do I say? Yes, 'liable,' if a gentleman in difficulties with bailiffs inside his door, and a couple more watching the back and front of his house, may be said to be liable to arrest. If she had a couple of winged dragons to guard Mimmie day and night, she could not be positively sure of him, for all the dog-stealers in London are banded together against the liberties of that French poodle ; they are not, of course, thirsting for his life, but they have set their hearts upon pocketing his ransom. Yet every Christmas that has found me in Connaught Square has found Mimmie there also, and it did so this last December that ever was. Incessant vigilance ; a blue ribbon round his neck, one end of which was always in the hand of his mistress when he went abroad ; a silver bell, whose tinkling, did it intermit for half a second, was missed by her watchful ears ; a couch at her bed-foot ; a cushion at her right hand during meal-times—these were a few of the precautions, thanks to which Adela had managed to retain possession of her treasure for years, each of which seemed more to endear to her the shivering object of her affections. I use that adjective because Mimmie always did shiver very uncomfortably, or, at all events, always at Christmas-time, in spite of a little scarlet jacket, which reminded one somehow of Red Riding-hood, her grandmother, and the wolf, at the same moment. For Mimmie's face was, for its size, exceedingly truculent, although his body only awoke sympathy in the good, and ridicule in the inhuman ; for the fact is, he was one of those half-shaven poodles, one end of which resembles in miniature the King of Beasts, and the other a shorn

sheep: like the month of March, he came in, said Adela's nephew, like a lion, and went out like a lamb; an observation which she never forgave that wicked wag, and will remember, I am afraid, to her last gasp, by forgetting him in her will.

However, 'to resume,' as those dear old twaddlers of the Minerva Press (from whom I have caught the trick of digression) used to say. When I arrived in Connaught Square last Christmas-eve, Mimmie was on the drawing-room sofa, couched on seal-skin, but nevertheless shivering as usual, until his silver bell rang quite a peal.

'Dearest Adela,' cried I, embracing my hostess, 'you look very pale! Nothing is wrong with our precious little favourite here, I hope?' For nothing was ever wrong with Adela herself, I knew: she has a constitution that three dinner-parties a week, with the opera on alternate nights for a dozen seasons, has failed to shatter or even weaken in the smallest degree: however, it must be added, she does not get up so early in the morning as we do at Sleepiton.

'Nothing is now the matter, Cordy' (my name is Cordelia); 'but I am suffering from the effects of a catastrophe—nay, a course of catastrophes—such as perhaps has never before tried human heartstrings so severely in this world.'

'Ah, then, something *has* happened to Mimmie!' exclaimed I.

'Of course,' returned my sister-in-law. 'What other trouble could have so moved me? Look at these weary eyes, this wasted form! Anxiety, sorrow, despair, have each in turn consumed me; last of all came reaction'—she pointed towards the dog, as though he answered to that name instead of Mimmie—'and then I broke down altogether. The recovery of half-drowned persons, you know, Cordy, is said to be the most painful part of drowning, and so it has been with me.'

'Mimmie has not been half-drowned, has he?' said I, not exactly understanding the drift of my sister-in-law's statement.

'No, no ; much worse than that. But it is no use your guessing. The imagination of the most morbid can never picture the reality of what has occurred to that precious dog. What you witness is a resuscitation from the tomb.'

I stared at Mimmie with all my might, throwing into, at the same time, my expression all the sympathy of which it was capable ; but I was aware that the performance was a failure. I had such very little data, you see, to go upon ; and the creature looked so wonderfully comfortable except for his shivers.

'Dead and alive !' exclaimed my sister-in-law in lugubrious tones—'dead and alive, and lost and found !'

'What ! has our dear Mimmie been lost at last ?' cried I, catching at this sprig of reason in Adela's wild talk.

'Yes, Cordy—lost indeed ; not for an hour, as upon that occasion when we found him curled up in my knitted *chaud soulie* ; or in that worse affair, when he got shut up in the cellaret, like the poor lady in the Mistletoe Bough—but for whole days and nights—sleepless nights, you may be sure, to *me* ; and when found—think of *this*, Cordy—only returned to me a corpse !'

I had heard that ladies of fashion in London are sometimes addicted to drink, and I began to think that dearest Adela had given way to this custom since last year, and was not quite herself ; but I said nothing, only sat down near the handle of the bell.

'I never wrote to you about it, Cordy, for I had not the heart to write ; but now that I have my darling back again—he only arrived last night—it will be quite a comfort to me to tell you his sad story. Let me see—I think it was in October that you heard from me concerning Jemima's leaving us : she was a good cook, and understood Mimmie's constitution thoroughly, so that I was really sorry to part with her. Moreover, I think I may say that she had a kind mistress, and when I was not myself at hand, that Mimmie evinced his gratitude and affection towards her in a thousand ways. However, she gave up all that "to better herself," forsooth, as the poor misguided creature chose to call getting married, and left

us for an Irishman with red whiskers and a cast in his eye. The woman that I engaged in her place was not nearly so good a cook, but she had excellent testimonials from her last two places ; and it was especially stated of her, that she could be trusted with untold gold. She therefore took Jemima's place as custodian, in my absence, of our precious Mimmie.

'Not three days had elapsed, however, after she set foot in this doomed house, when that lovely dog suddenly disappeared. O the void, the void, the void, Cordy dear, and the aching of this wretched heart ! Never to hear his whine when he wanted to be let out ! —never to hear his scratching at the door when he wanted to be let in ! —never to hear his little feet go pit-a-pat upon the dining-room table on their way to the fig-box at dessert ! Tennyson says that "it is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all." I am not sure about that ; but, at all events, the best thing that one can possibly do under those circumstances is to offer a reward ; and I did so. Everybody knew how broken-hearted I was, and how money in such a case would be no object. All the servants were well aware that I would give almost anything even for Mimmie's poor dead body, rather than be tortured with the idea that he was perhaps being ill-treated — fed on liver, bullocks' heart, chitterlings. Goodness knew what his delicate appetite might not be starved into eating ! On the fifth day of my darling's disappearance, a person entered, and sent up a request to see me in private upon particular business. He was in decent mourning—which he had put on, doubtless, out of respect to my feelings—some people might have taken him for an unbeneficed clergyman ; but I knew that he was a dog-stealer at the very first glance, and I would rather have seen him in my drawing-room just then, than the two archbishops, for I knew that he brought me tidings of my missing favourite.

"You know something about my dog ?" said I at once.

"Yes, Ma'am, I do. If you will be kind enough to

sign this paper, which it binds you not to prosecute me in the matter, whatever happens, I'll tell you what I know."

"I would have signed anything, short of a blank cheque, to hear what this man had got to say: his wicked eyes had but lately looked upon my Mimmie; his uncleanly hands, perhaps, had fed him; his cruel voice had chided him, very likely, for sobbing his little heart out in grief at being taken from his home. Still, though he was not the rose (nor anything like it, particularly in the way of odour), he had been near the rose, and that gave him an interest in my eyes. I signed the document with eager fingers. "Go on," I cried; "do not rack me with suspense. Say my Mimmie is happy."

"Well, Ma'am," returned this person, twisting his fur-cap round and round in an embarrassed manner, "he aint *unhappy*, that's certain. The fact is, Ma'am—— Now, don't ye 'take on' at what I'm going to tell you; we must all come to it some day, you know——"

"Is he dead, man?" interrupted I in an awful voice.

"Yes, Ma'am, that's truth; dead as a door-nail is your little doag. He was tuk with summut or other only last night—I think it was the cattle plague—and all the man could do as found him (and werry great care on him he took) was without avail. Your little doag is dead; but very nice he would make up to stuff and put in a glass case, or make a footstool of for the winter months——"

"Silence, wretch!" exclaimed I. "Dare not to mock my grief with such abominable suggestions. Bring my poor Mimmie's body home, that I may pay it the last sad offices; and never let me see your evil face again."

"Certainly, Ma'am," returned he, but without stirring a step. "The price of that precious carkiss is 'Ten Pounds.'"

"Ten pounds!" cried I, "for a dead dog!"

"And dirt cheap, too, Ma'am," replied this shameless individual. "Why, the surgeons used to give us as much for a mere human stranger. Think of the melan

choly pleasure as will be given to your feelin' heart in seein' the last of him, and puttin' him, maybe, in one of them big flower-pots, so that Forget-me-nots, and Heart-seases, and Daffydowndillies——"

"Hold your wicked tongue, bad man," cried I. "Here is five pounds on account. I don't want to hear one syllable of how you stole my dog, or how you murdered him, though I believe that you did both; but only bring his dear remains to me, and you shall have the rest of the money. Go, go."—You may suppose what a good cry I had, Cordy, when that vile wretch closed the door behind him, and I was left alone with my regrets.

'The next morning, this monster left our dead favourite at the door, wrapped up in white-brown paper. I would not see him, but sent the money down by my maid, who was also to identify the body; for I knew that there was no limit to the treacheries of his abandoned class. But there was no doubt about the matter whatever. There was Mimmie, stark and stiff, his lion-mane quite out of curl; that lovely tail tucked under him (to economise space), which was never to wag again at the voice of his mistress. We brought him into the boudoir, and laid him out, poor dear, upon the loo-table.'

'At all events, Adela,' said I, perceiving that she was too overcome to continue the subject, 'you had nothing to reproach yourself with upon his account.'

'Not much, Cordy—not much: but there was one thing that went through me like a knife. I had been very cruel to him the very day before he was taken from us; he would not "beg," as usual, for his breakfast, and I gave him his bread and milk without any sugar in it—and he was *so* fond of sugar.'

'You will make yourself ill, if you go on like that, Adela,' said I.

'I *have* made myself ill, Cordy. The doctor is coming to see me this very afternoon. But it does me good to cry: and, besides, I have told you the worst now, and there is nothing but good news to speak of further. About a week after Mimmie was stuffed and put in a

glass-case at the foot of my bed—just where he used to sleep in his lifetime—the wicked wretch who had brought him to me called again. At first, I refused to let him come up stairs—for what had we now in common?—but he was so importunate over the area railings, that the cook implored me to see him, if it was but for a moment; so I did. I flattered myself that perhaps the wretch might have kept behind a lock of the poor dear's hair, which I should have been glad enough to purchase for a locket. However, he had come on quite another errand.

"I am afraid, Ma'am," said he gravely, "that you and I have both been and made a four paw."

"A what!" cried, I with indignation.

"A mistake about that there small quadruped as you lost. You have not got the right un back, after all. He's very like in other respeks; but if you look inside his mouth, the colour of the roof is different. Perhaps, if you have got the little party in the house, you will just send for him."

"I rang the bell for the precious relic to be brought down, while my heart was torn by conflicting feelings; doubt of this villain and his amazing statement; chagrin at having shed so many tears over a possibly strange dog; hope—ecstatic hope—that my Mimmie might yet be restored to my longing arms alive! Certainly the roof of the stuffed beauty was not so pink as my own Mimmie's had been; but then, as I argued, it might have changed its peach-like hue in the—the process.

"Moreover," continued the dog-stealer, "there is one more row of curls shaved off, Ma'am."

"Upon this occasion, and for his own base purposes, the wretch really spoke the truth. Grief had doubtless prevented my making any strict *post-mortem* investigation; but now I perceived that I had indeed been tricked.

"I will buy no more bodies, man," cried I; "but if my Mimmie is still alive, I will forgive you even this."

"I rayther think he is, Ma'am; I've a notion I might get at the man who has got him in keeping. Only, of course, you must pay more for a live dog than a dead one. Say fifteen pound."

"I will give you five," said I; "and you shall have the stuffed dog back again; the process was a very expensive one."

'At this the wretch actually burst out laughing.

'In a word, Cordy, after haggling for many minutes, and signing another document, by which, as I have since heard, I made myself amenable to the law, by compounding a felony, I had to promise him the money. That very night, I received my Mimmie safe and sound. There was no occasion to count his curls, or look in his mouth, for the way in which he frolicked about me, and answered to his name, was the best proof my heart could give me that he was my dog indeed. The only thing changed about him was his appetite; and I am bound to say that that was much improved.'

'But how did it all happen? and why did the man sell you the dead dog?'

'Well, it was all done by the new cook, who gave warning the very day after Mimmie was restored to me. It turns out that she was the wife of the dog-stealer, and only engaged herself to me in order to put the dear creature into her husband's wicked hands. He had already stolen another animal almost exactly similar, and the owner not offering a reward sufficiently high, he had come hither to know what he could get out of me for it—dead. He dared not sell it me alive, as of course I should in that case have at once detected the fraud. So I was indirectly the cause of the murder of poor Lady McGlowrie's pet. I sent her the stuffed animal with my best compliments; but she was not at all grateful, and has never even offered to pay for the glass shade or the velvet cushion. Altogether, the affair has cost me a mint of money, as well as severely tried my constitution—— That's the doctor's ring, if I am not mistaken. There's no occasion to leave the room, dear. He's a very nice man; and I always employ him because he seems to be so fond of dogs. He generally brings his little terrier with him, because he knows it pleases me.'

While she was yet speaking, Dr. Carmairs was announced by the footman, and his four-footed companion

by a snappish snarl from Mimmie. It was a very vulgar dog, and I scarcely wondered that the aristocratic animal on the sealskin should have objected to his intrusion: the contrast between the poodle 'oiled and curled like an Assyrian bull, and the little terrier, black and iron-mould (rather than tan), with the barest apology for a tail that ever was seen, was very remarkable.

When the doctor had paid his respects to Adela, and been introduced to me, he proceeded to ask after 'the 32-pounder,' as he facetiously termed Mimmie, whose recovery (including advertising and the stuffed dog) had cost my sister-in-law a great deal more than the twenty-five sovereigns paid to her cook's husband.

'Mr. Cadger has not given him another invitation, I hope, since my last visit?'

'How can you trifle with my feelings, doctor?' returned Adela peevishly. 'You know that I never let him out of sight for a moment, now. There is not a dog in London so well looked after.'

'That's all very well, Madam: but you know as well as I do that a pet's never safe unless the same precautions are taken as I have adopted with little Billy. You had much better let me have your poodle for a course of——' Here Adela put her fingers into her ears, and screamed at her medical attendant in a manner highly becoming a patient, even though afflicted with nerves.

'If you won't listen,' said the doctor, turning good-humouredly to me, 'I shall try and secure the advocacy of your sister-in-law.—I want Miss Brabazon to let me insure her Mimmie against dog-stealers, as I have already insured my terrier, whose native ugliness has been no protection from their snares. You must know, Madam, that Billy is a dog of science, and has been a greater benefactor to the human species than any man since Jenner. I bought him when a puppy for a shilling, in the Tottenham Court Road, and have used him for the purposes of Toxicological experiment for many years. Billy's tissues have been impregnated with every description of deadly poison; into his veins have been injected the most fatal fluids, until his circulation can scarcely be

said to be that liquid, which a wag in my medical-student days used always to denominate Hervey's Sauce, because he said "blood" was not a pretty word. Billy is not a dog of fashionable exterior, but he has been bent with strychnine like a Bean, Madam. He used at last to howl in quite an afflicting manner whenever I whistled to him to come into my laboratory; but now he's no longer a subject—are you, Billy? He's more like a king; or, at all events, a gentleman at large. My little Susy, bless her! took such pity upon him, that she insisted upon his release from his scientific duties, and becoming her pet. From that moment, in spite of his very unprepossessing appearance and deteriorated constitution, his liberties became imperilled. Before a week of his new life had begun, Billy was stolen by this very Mr. Cadger, who has so imposed upon our friend here. Susy was inconsolable, and wanted me to offer a purse of sequins, or something of that sort—the dear child being devoted to the *Arabian Nights*—for his recovery. But I said: "No. Mr. Cadger will never be able to dispose of our ugly Billy, who is fortunately one of those articles of property which are described as 'of no value but to the owner.' Cadger will come to me of his own accord." And back he came, twisting his fur-cap, and spinning his very unlikely yarn about "a friend in the city," just as though I had wanted to borrow money of him. But all I said to Cadger was this: "It is true I have lost this dog, but he is of no use to me whatever. You would never have heard that I was enquiring for it, but that I thought it a duty to my fellow-creatures to warn them (if I could do so without expense) of what might be a great peril to themselves. I have used that dog for purposes of experiment, until it is so *impregnated with poison, that, if it should but lick a man's hand, his life would not be worth six hours' purchase.* If a drop of his blood should chance to be spilled, it would infect a house for ever. That's all."

‘Mr. Cadger turned deadly pale; murmured something about going to tell his friend in the city; and little Billy found his way home, all by himself, that very evening.

Now, if Miss Brabazon would only be persuaded to lend me Mimmie for a course of scientific experiments, I will guarantee the safety of her pet—that is, from dog-stealers.'

But Adela would not hear of this arrangement; and Mimmie, the apple of her eye, is guarded as before, as though he were one of the golden apples of the Hesperides.





MISS MONTMORENCI.

THERE are marrying-families, just as there are 'marrying-men,' and also families who, it seems to have been settled from the first, shall never marry. Half-a-dozen daughters may be 'got off,' as the phrase goes, in the one case, and not above one of them, perhaps, make an absolutely bad match, such as a union with a subaltern; yet the girls may have neither money nor good looks. In the other case, on the contrary, there may be a little something in the funds belonging to each Miss Singleton, and one may have talents, and another fine ankles, and a third may sing like a nightingale; yet, to the great chagrin of the old birds, they will never leave the paternal nest, and, when those are dead, will still continue to live together there or elsewhere, in maiden meditation fancy free. It is the vulgar fashion to laugh at maiden ladies when, in the opinion of others—although, perhaps, not in their own—they have reached the period when the chance of getting a husband has become hopeless, and to conclude that all the romance of female life is concentrated in being wooed. Now, this is far from being the case. There is, in reality, infinite pathos even in those apparently uninteresting persons who lavish their love, for want of a better object, upon cats, or embrace—*faute de mieux*—Asceticism, and take up with Protestant nunneries. I do not speak of such spinsters—although they are by no means rare—as scatter their wealth of love over

friends and relatives, and go unaffectedly among the poor with kindly gifts and words; although I will just remark, that if the word 'angel' has an application to any description of female, it is surely to *them*, but confine my remarks solely to commonplace, unmarried females.

Do you suppose that if Miss Clarissa Singleton, for instance, has never had a definite offer of marriage, she has not been at least once upon the point of receiving one? Does she not remember the moment, although it was a quarter of a century ago, and more, when Charley Spinks, then just appointed to the Indian Civil Service, sat with her upon the purple cliff-top, looking out upon the limitless sea, and spoke of his impending exile, and that return to England which was never to be? She would have been an engaged young woman—that is her belief—had not the excursion-steamer from Ramsgate just then rounded the headland, and turned the conversation into another channel. Her enemies said, of course, that she had set her cap—although she did not wear caps then, alas! nor a front neither—at the young man from Haileybury (who, indeed, was her junior by a few years), and had done her very best to ensnare him, without effect; but that is not Clarissa's view, nor that of her Sister Mary. Polly (as she was always called), without entertaining the least impression that *she* has ever been the object of any man's affection, has a loving belief in the attractions of her younger sister, which is a romance in itself. She reverently keeps the day of young Spinks's decease by violence—he was swallowed by a royal Bengal tiger—as the date of Clarissa's widowhood. They talk of the mournful affair together with genuine sorrow, and mingle sympathetic tears. They do not know that Spinks had *delirium tremens* twice from indulgence in brandy pawnee before he met with his fatal adventure, or that he had been betrothed to Miss Fahrenheit of Calcutta, months before it occurred. Miss F., who belongs to a marrying-family, and went out to India, indeed, for that very purpose, has married two husbands since. 'Spinks—Spinks?' she has forgotten the very name which is held so sacred at Vestal Lodge by the two old maids with whom romance has

nothing to do. Yet although Miss Mary errs when she deems her dearest Clarissa still beautiful, is there not something touching and pathetic about that hallucination? She is very bitter against the young ladies of the neighbourhood—those ‘mere chits of girls’—who monopolise the male attention at picnics and evening-parties, to the detriment of her sister; she says uncharitable things about that little flirtation in the orangery at Lady Tiptop’s ball, of which she happened to be an unseen witness when everybody was thought to have been in the supper-room, only nobody had had the charity to take her down; her religious views are acid from being kept so long in a somewhat narrow vessel without any admixture of opinions male, except those of her favourite minister—but nevertheless Miss Mary Singleton is a good creature (as poor human creatures go), with scarcely a grain of selfishness in her disposition.

Miss Clarissa, too, is far from being that ridiculous individual which many of her younger neighbours would have us believe. Although her pet-dog Flora is fatter than is becoming, or even judicious for the dear animal’s own well-being, and its mistress still continues to stuff it with dainties unfit for the canine palate, such as macaroons, yet her conduct is neither so foolish nor so blamable as that of Mrs. Doting, who brings up her children so as to be hated by all men who set foot in her otherwise pleasant drawing-room, or as that of Lady Tiptop, who commits the custody of her offspring to hireling hands from the moment of their birth, and is not quite certain whether there are three children or four up in that third-floor nursery. It is true that poor Clarissa has no Mr. Doting to help her to kill her dog with kindness, and no Sir Harry Tiptop to neglect both her and it, but as husbands of others, they afford her a most interesting subject of conversation and comment. There is nobody in the county more full of information than Miss Clarissa and her sister. Their three maids have the most wonderful power of acquiring knowledge concerning other people’s affairs, and they are said to be sent forth from Vestal Lodge for that express purpose. The whole house-

hold may be considered to be a colony of the sub-genus *Eciton*, whereof the servants are the foraging ants, and their mistresses the soldiers ; and very ingenious insects too.

There is one form under which the Miss Singletons appear least of all attractive to their fellow-creatures—namely, when they keep a seminary for young ladies, which it is surely only natural that they, being in straitened circumstances, should do. For my own part, I think there is something sad, rather than ridiculous, about the phrase ‘decayed gentlewoman.’ I believe it to be only a curious coincidence—and not a fact the genuineness of which is to be questioned—that these are always the daughters either of ‘a general-officer,’ or of ‘an evangelical clergyman.’ You would not have them advertise themselves, hoping to be teachers of youth, as the offspring of an attorney, I suppose, or of a veterinary surgeon. At this point my mind reverts with a flash to Miss Montmorenci.

I had originally purposed to write an edifying essay upon old maids ; to produce such a monograph upon that subject as should rescue even the inferior orders of that species from the vulgar contumely which they have endured so long and so undeservedly. But I cannot divorce myself (speaking metaphorically, of course) from Miss Montmorenci, having once had that lady brought to my affectionate remembrance. I would willingly write her entire biography, if the facts lay within my reach, but they do not ; nobody knows, to begin with, when she was born ; she has no contemporaries, and I have not sufficient data to judge from her personal appearance. I never saw her without her raven hair, and her teeth that shame the elephant. Taking her as one finds her, without her veil, I should say she was sixty ; looking at her, as she moves away, or—less delicately—seen from behind, with her head up and her figure as straight as an arrow, I should put her down at six-and-twenty. Great, however, as is the interval between those epochs, I do not think her real age lies within their limits ; yet, do not imagine upon that account that she has ceased to con-

sider man as a dangerous animal. No, she is still modest and retiring in her manners, and would not enter an omnibus, where there is no separation between the sexes, upon any account whatever. She has three maiden sisters who assist her in the supervision of a suburban seminary for young ladies, and the whole four have long ago made up their minds to perish, single. Their establishment is justly celebrated for strictness and propriety. I remember, when a lad of fifteen, going to see my own sister there, and kissing a very pretty girl, with whom she had sworn an eternal friendship, upon the stairs. It was a circular staircase, and Miss Montmorenci was looking over the banisters on the top landing. I never shall forget her indignation, and the horror with which she threw up her hands with mittens on them. It was a wonder she did not brick up the offending pupil in company with a French roll and a glass of water; though, I am sure, I meant no harm, but only to convince the young lady that the affection which my relative entertained for her was approved of by myself.

And yet it was destined that the nerves of Miss Montmorenci should receive even a still greater shock than the above, and more than one of them; her earthly career is not yet closed, but it is not possible that there can be anything in store for her so dreadful as the two misfortunes which I have in my mind. One of them occurred at the period of the Great Exhibition in Kensington. Miss Montmorenci had obtained leave from the various parents of her little 'charges'—as she sometimes called them, in contrast, I suppose, to her other sort of 'charges,' which my father used to say were anything but little—to take them to the world's fair; they were to come up by instalments of twelve, so that when they left the train, there might be four cabs engaged with a Miss Montmorenci in each of them. There had been a question as to whether private flies should not be engaged, but it had been finally determined—unfortunately, as it turned out—to risk the moral contagion of a hack carriage. It was the only time in her existence, as she subsequently observed, that Miss Montmorenci had ever

failed in the article of gentility ; and she suffered for it bitterly. When she had brought her train of young ladies to the turnstile—and you may be sure it was a half-crown day—one of the door-keepers observed : ‘ This a school, Ma’am, is it not ? ’

‘ It is a seminary of young ladies,’ responded Miss Montmorenci haughtily.

‘ Then please to give your name and address, Ma’am, that it may be reported in the *Times*. It is especially requested that all schools and colleges, sent here by public subscription, or whose expenses have been defrayed by private charity——’

Miss Montmorenci was spared the conclusion of this heartless speech ; nature mercifully interfered in the guise of a fainting fit, and cherry-brandy had to be administered to her at the nearest refreshment-stall. She was restored—I can scarcely say ‘ happily ’—to consciousness, but never recovered the shock of having had her fashionable establishment confounded with a charity school ! She had worn her own hair up to that period, but it turned black almost immediately afterwards, doubtless from anguish of mind.

Yet, as I have hinted, there was still a bitterness left in her cup of life, although she might so reasonably have concluded that she had drained it to the very dregs. During the Christmas holidays she came up to town, and endeavoured to seek forgetfulness in harmless dissipation. She went to the Pantheon, and to the British Museum, and to the Zoological Gardens. At night she frequented oratorios, and readings from Shakspeare at five shillings a stall, which it seems to me are a little dear, but then they are so fashionable. On Sundays, she promised herself especial pleasure—for Miss Montmorenci loves clergymen of almost all denominations, and might be backed (were such a proceeding decorous) to sit under the very dreariest divine with greater patience, if not edification, than any other individual of her weight and age. From St. Paul’s Cathedral to the Foundling Hospital, from Well Street Chapel to Mr. Spurgeon’s Tabernacle, she would doubtless have demurely flitted, like a

drab butterfly over clover, had not a circumstance occurred which sent her home on the next lawful day, and almost caused her to determine never to enter a metropolitan place of worship again. One Sunday afternoon she entered a certain West-end church, after service had already begun, having been misinformed as to its time of commencement. No verger being visible, and being very nervous, Miss Montmorenci laid her hand upon the door of a pew wherein sat a number of persons of her own sex, but which still had plenty of room in it, and quietly took her seat. The others stared at her a good deal, but she well knew how the best Christians will stare at a fellow-creature who trespasses upon their vested rights in the matter of a hassock, and was therefore not troubled by that circumstance. Others of the congregation stared too, and the verger—who ought to have known better—opened his eyes very wide indeed, when he saw where Miss Montmorenci had seated herself.

‘I dare say,’ thought she at first, ‘I have intruded among some family of consequence;’ but presently she noticed that several of her fellow-worshippers were dressed quite humbly, appearing as the wives of artisans. This puzzled her very much. At one part of the service, where Miss Montmorenci had been always accustomed to stand up, all the occupants of her pew fell on their knees, and not liking to appear singular, she did the same. The rest of the congregation, however, kept their feet. A vague feeling of discomfort, and of being somehow in a false position, made it quite impossible for Miss Montmorenci to attend to the sermon, and for the first time in her life she was glad to hurry out of church. The verger shot at her a glance of impudent drollery, which confirmed her in her resolution to go directly to the lady who had recommended her to that place of worship, and demand an explanation of what had occurred.

‘I never, my dear, met with such a rude congregation or so insolent a pew-opener,’ cried she. ‘What is there odd in *my* appearance, I should like to know, to provoke such levity? If there *is* anything, pray do not hesitate to tell me.’

‘Well, my dear Miss Montmorenci, you got into a peculiar pew. You observed they were all females, did you not ; and none of them very far advanced in years ? Well, that is the pew set apart for——. Now, my dear Miss Montmorenci, be calm ; I see you have guessed all.’

Once again Nature mercifully interfered upon Miss M.’s behalf, and this time in the guise of hysterics ; she had several fits of them, and passed the intervals of consciousness in bewailing the disgrace that had befallen her. I trust the news may never reach the seminary over which she presides, but—poor Miss Montmorenci had been churched !





THE HORRORS OF A HOLIDAY.



THINK it is the prospectus of Mr. Wackford Squeers that dilates so eloquently upon the disadvantage of that thing called a vacation, which at seminaries less well principled than Dotheboys Hall, is wont to interrupt the studies of youth at Christmas and midsummer ; but with this exception, I have observed that there is a popular prejudice in favour of holidays, not only among school-boys, in whom the mental powers have not come to maturity, but even with grown people, whom I should have thought experience might have made wiser in this matter.

Our senators are always taking holidays, from which I gather that they like him ; adjourning the House on account of the Derby Day—one of the most melancholy festivals, to my mind, in all the calendar ; for if you use the rail to Epsom, you are robbed and maimed, and if you use the road, you are upon it seven mortal hours ; proroguing their day of assembly because of the hunting ; and dissolving themselves in order to be on the moors. But this I will say for those of them who are statesmen, that they perceive the fallacy under which the rest are labouring—for nothing is more laborious than this holiday-making—and go about their work just as usual, only on platforms instead of at St. Stephen's. The bishops, too, do not often give way to this weakness : but perhaps their work is not so utterly exhausting as some would

have us believe, or rather, let us say, doubtless to these good men every day is more or less of a holiday. As for the lawyers, their Long Vacation is a disgrace to their intelligence; and the way in which they take advantage of it to the uttermost, a positive humiliation to human nature. I cannot conceive how they manage to spend those weary months of autumn without cross-examining anybody but *valets de place*, or putting in evidence anything beyond the notches in their alpenstocks. For my part, did I belong to that profession, I could not do it, but should insist upon one law-court at least being kept open during September for legal practice, even if there was no good judge to be got to listen to me, and I had to address the mace as 'My Lord.'

Let it not be imagined, from these remarks, that the present writer does not know what work is, and on that account stands in no need of relaxation. There are very few people in London — except the regular men of pleasure about town—who work as hard as I work. It makes me smile to hear my City friends talk of the toils of their calling. One day or other there will be a book brought out which shall expose the whole system of what is known by the generic term Business. If work were a thing to be produced like chicken, by *sitting*, then I grant you there are no such working-men as your City people. 'Our hours of business are from nine to five — unless anything particular should detain us beyond that hour.' The last part of the sentence is for the benefit of their wives, to account for the absence of their lords and masters from the domestic table, in case anything more attractive should present itself than coming home to dinner. From nine to five is supposed by the British public to be passed by these slaves of the desk in certain assiduous and exhaustive mental exercises; it is not calculation exactly, nor yet speculation, but something mysterious and intelligible, which partakes of the nature of both. This belief in the diligence and acumen of the mercantile community is a superstition which Englishmen cling to as to their book of books, the *l'écérage*. The whole notion is baseless as a dream;

but that, as I have said, will be treated of in another place. What seems certain in the meantime is, that the work of the man of business is so wearing, as to require, at least once a year, country-air, sea-air, waters chalybeate or otherwise, and above all, a good long holiday.

Now, an occasional day of rest, nay, of amusement, is undoubtedly charming; and to the real toiler—such as the artisan—a boon which one would wish to see much oftener granted. But what do these business-men, these lawyers, these parliamentary people, do with whole weeks of idleness and leisure? Those persons who take to ascending mountains many thousand feet above the level of the sea, do but exchange one species of work for another, but the vast majority do nothing, and seem to like it. Poor Walter Scott incurred a great deal of pity and some contempt for insisting upon writing a little even during these unfrequent intervals when he ‘was refreshing the machine.’ But how could he help it?—how, as it seems to me, can any man help it? It is very far from my object to moralise upon the evils of idleness. Like a certain venerable divine of my acquaintance who inveighs against smoking, I hate it **only** because I can’t enjoy it. I have tried it, and it makes me sick. That advertisement of ‘eight hours at the sea-side’ seems to me to be pregnant with wisdom. Eight hours are about the limit of time which it seems to me possible for an intelligent being to pass with pleasure in sucking pebbles on the beach, in making ‘dick, duck, drakes’ in the water, in picking up seaweed and sea-anemones, and in exploring little circulating libraries in search of books which he could lay his hand on at once at Mudie’s, or even at any of those town libraries, which place the word ‘limited’ so appropriately in connection with their prospectuses.

When you have met Jones and his wife (whom you have left London expressly to avoid) on the Parade, and said you were glad to see them, what is to be done then, but wait anxiously for the arrival of the evening paper? It is certainly something that you now know how to value

those conveniences which before you began your holiday you accepted, without welcome, and as a matter of course. It is a curious but undoubted fact, that almost everything which gives you genuine content during this period of enjoyment arises from the little work that it is still necessary you should do; and that all which you look forward to with the greatest interest comes from the metropolis (whether it be London, Liverpool, or Edinburgh), from which you have just escaped with such mistaken hilarity. The very fish which is captured before your eyes is carried thither by railway for the gratification of your late fellow-prisoners, and only when they are glutted with the supply do you see a fin at your lodging-house table. What a squeezey miserable house it is compared with your own residence, where your cook is probably now giving her private parties in your reception-rooms (for her 'season' begins just when yours ends); you were not allowed to bring her with you, but must perforce accept the services of the landlady, who has been accustomed (she says) to send up dinners to the first families in the best style. If that is true, the first families are far from particular.

Your wife, who dare not remonstrate with *her* (such is her formidable appearance and mode of address), is not deterred from letting *you* know that you ought to be ashamed of yourself for being put out by trifles—such as underdone joints; and besides, you should not expect comforts such as you have at home, when at the sea-side and out for your holiday. Now that seems to me to be a very illogical statement, and one in which my reason utterly refuses to acquiesce. If a holiday means under-done meat, and fish that has made a double land-journey, let me go back to town. It is only the children who prevent my doing so; *they* certainly do enjoy themselves; and so should I, if I could take pleasure in digging with a wooden spade, or walling out the flowing tide with a sand-bastion, or in riding in a goat-carriage, or in eating periwinkles with a pin. But none of these occupations are suitable to a person of my years and habits. However, it is something to watch them, and to know

that they are supremely happy. The full horrors of a holiday are only experienced when one is condemned to take it *alone*.

This happened to me in February last (of all cheerful months for being idle in !), and I shall never forget it. After completing a certain immortal work of fiction, which shall be nameless (for the present), my medical attendant peremptorily interfered in my mode of life, and prescribed total idleness. I own I am a sad coward at taking medicine, and yet I had almost rather that he had written castor oil. No thoughts to be jotted down on paper ; no thoughts to be entertained at all ; no retiring into the study between breakfast and luncheon ; no correction of proofs ; no revision of manuscripts. The fiat had gone forth that I was to enjoy myself. From morn till eve was to be one white and dazzling blank. At first, I own, the thing had rather a pleasant look. To smoke my pipe without having to reflect upon the conduct to be pursued that morning by my hero, placed in embarrassing circumstances which required all his towering intellect, and all his nobility of spirit, and all his gigantic physical strength ; without having to consider how my heroine ought to behave in the most delicate of positions, which demanded all her acknowledged tact, and all her exquisite sensibility, and all that personal beauty which reminded us so of the sunny south ; without having to cudgel my brains for a fit punishment for that remorseless villain, who, having most satisfactorily disposed of certain troublesome though well-meaning characters by fire and sword, remained on hand himself, obstructing the smooth current of events. —Not to have to think about all these people was, just at first, I allow, a relief and a comfort ; but by the time I had read the paper and arranged the books (which I was forbidden to peruse) in my little sanctum, and gone up to look at the children, who were almost frightened to see me at that unaccustomed hour, I began to feel a little weary.

‘Why not go out, my dear, and enjoy the sunshine?’ enquired my wife.

'Ay, very true!' said I. For since I never do go out until after luncheon, this idea never would have occurred to me of my own head. But like the making of a quarrel, it takes two people (at least) to enjoy the sunshine, and my wife, good creature (whose brain had *not* been pronounced in danger of softening) was far too busy to accompany me. Moreover, the February sun is not a very brilliant article, nor can it even be warranted to last; and when it went in, which it did in about three minutes, I did the same, with my teeth chattering. I took up the *Times* again mechanically, and reperused it with that loathing which is the peculiar effect of twice-read news. Then I went up again to the children, but was met at the door of their apartment by the nurse, with uplifted finger; 'Hush, Sir; you mustn't come in now. They're both asleep.' I had forgotten that it was their peculiar habit to go to bed again as soon as they had had their breakfast, but I most heartily began to wish that it was mine.

Fortunately, I remembered that I had a letter to write (it had been owing about seventeen months) to a dear friend in South Australia, and I sat down and wrote him a long one. What intelligence, what wit, what pathos, were spread over those three sheets of foreign post! I was quite astonished at myself as I read it over, and felt half inclined to address it to the printer instead of my correspondent. It was certainly the best letter I had ever written in my life, and no wonder! For I am accustomed to pay the epistolary claims of friendship and relationship only *after* those of literature have been satisfied; whereas, in this case, the very cream of my intellect had been given to this man in the bush. Here was, as it were, a fountain of precious wine set running for a limited period, and nothing to catch it in but the most ordinary wash-hand basin. And was it always to be so during this hateful holiday? Now I knew why Horace Walpole, and others with both wits and wealth, had written such good letters. It was not necessary that they should write books, and therefore they gave the best of what they had to say to their friends.

Why, surely, here was a subject in itself for a pleasing and thoughtful ess — But what had the doctor said? ‘Total idleness, or I will not answer for your brain.’ Perhaps I had done wrong to write even that letter!

‘Why don’t you ask somebody to take a holiday *with* you?’ remarked my wife, when I had rather put her out by interfering with a number of her domestic arrangements, one after the other, and defended myself upon the ground that I had nothing else to do.

Excellent thought! I snatched up my hat, and made a round of unseasonable calls at once. It was astonishing how everybody was engaged. Like the boy in the fable who wanted the ox and the dog and a number of other useful animals to make a holiday with *him*, I found nobody would leave their business for my pleasure. They congratulated me, they expressed themselves as being exceedingly envious of my happy state, but they were not themselves threatened with softening of the brain, and must therefore pursue their daily toil. Why did I not go down to the sea-side, or into the country? Because, replied I grimly, my life is insured, and my family would forfeit all benefit upon that transaction in the event of my committing suicide. Could a man remain alone for four-and-twenty hours at South-end or Sandgate in the month of February, and not turn a yearning glance towards his razors? Would not the most philosophical subject of the Necessities of Being be induced by such a position to reflect seriously upon the Necessity of *not* Being?

I got my walks, as usual, in the afternoons, but they did not give me pleasure as before, for I was exhausted by my excursions of the morning. I returned home to dinner jaded and out of humour, and after dinner there was the loathsome *Times*, the very advertisements of which I knew by heart. In something like despair, I turned towards those of my acquaintance who were notorious as men of pleasure, and begged them to introduce me to the Halls of Revelry; though the peculiarity of their occupation is, that it does not begin until half-past

ten P.M., at which hour I am accustomed to retire to my virtuous couch. However, I was ordered to take a holiday, and so I took it; night after night I roamed—for the benefit of my health—from theatre to music hall, from music hall to supper-room, like some unhappy bee, who has been deceived by an artificial florist, and strives in vain to gather honey from ingenious combinations of paper and wax. Strange, indeed, are the delights of the dissipated! Wonderful is that enchanter Pleasure, who can persuade his votaries, night after night, that gas, and stifling heat, and evil smells form an atmosphere to be enjoyed, and stupid songs and witless jokes are matters to be applauded. Is it possible that the legs (and especially the knees) of the *habitués* of these sparkling scenes ache every morning as mine did under the same regimen? Do *their* heads throb—do *their* hands tremble? or is it that I am not cut out for a holiday-maker? At the expiration of ten days I met my doctor, and enquired in the mocking tones which I had learned of the stage-demons, whether he was satisfied with the ruin he had wrought? My hollow eyes, my sunken cheeks, my shambling gait, struck him with horror, notwithstanding the dreadful instances of disease with which his profession made him familiar.

‘Why my dear Sir,’ cried he, ‘you must have been disobeying my orders!—you must have begun another novel!’

‘No,’ answered I—‘not so: I have been following your instructions to the letter; I have been taking that holiday!—I have fallen a sacrifice to total idleness! Scientific fiend, behold your victim!’

He was shocked, as well he might be. ‘Go home,’ said he with gentleness—‘go home and keep quiet. I will send you a composing-draught, for you are excited, and will come and see you in the morning.’ He sent the draught, and I emptied it into the coal-scuttle. I tried some medicine of my own, which is kept in the ink-pot, and administered with a quill-pen. He expected to find me prostrate on the sofa, if not in bed; but like Dog Tray, when Mother Hubbard returned from

buying his coffin, he found me, if not laughing, in good spirits.

‘What are you doing?’ cried he—‘not at your desk again, I hope?’

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘and never mean to leave it. I am writing a paper from your own dictation, and I have called it the Horrors of a Holiday.’





BUYING LIFE.

I AM inclined to think that the divines are wrong in so universally ascribing to the prosperous a love of this life, and I doubt whether the notion of extinction does possess that terror for the human heart which is always ascribed to it by pulpit orators. It is the misfortune of the clergy, and yet one which we can scarcely wish remedied, that, regarding our fallen nature from a high orthodox standpoint themselves, they are often ignorant of how it looks from the position occupied by their less well principled fellow-creatures. 'Who is there without religion that does not contemplate death without a shudder?' is an expression very common in sermons. Even the atheist, we are told, recoils from the gloomy void of which it is *his* poor notion that death is the portal. Yet in China it costs less than fifty pounds to get a substitute to suffer capital punishment in your place, if the Son of the Moon and First Cousin to all the Planets has decreed your execution, and there are few more irreligious people under heaven than the Chinese. Moreover, these substitutes are often very respectable men, who wish to benefit their wife and children by the transaction; just as gentlemen here at home (less creditably) insure their lives in an indisputable office for the advantage of their families, and then put an end to their own existence.

It is true that some of these Celestial proxies are

regular scamps, and stipulate for the money down, and a week's grace in which to spend it in the most abandoned manner; but death is evidently no more feared in this case than in the other. In Japan, malefactors smoke upon the very scaffold, while their companions are having their heads cut off, and calmly remove their cheroots from their lips when their turn comes round. In Africa, a hearty meal—off something which here at home we should give to our pigs—seems to reconcile any gentleman of average philosophy to dissolution by violence. Nay, even in England there is sometimes exhibited an equal callousness as to that question supposed to be so engrossing, Are we to live or to die? A few years before the introduction of the new police, one Johnson was brought up at Bow Street upon the charge of hanging a certain Robert Wynd, his friend. Two watchmen had actually caught him, upon some waste ground with a little convenient timber on it, employed in this very act, and Wynd was black in the face and insensible when they cut him down. No sooner did he recover than he proceeded to attempt to rescue his companion, and therefore was himself charged with obstructing the officers in the execution of their duty. It came out, in evidence, that both the prisoners were greatly given to gambling, but having lost all they had, could get nobody to engage with them at their favourite game, which, if I remember right, was cribbage. They were therefore compelled to play with one another, and having nothing else to risk, each literally 'staked his existence.' Whoever won was to have the privilege of putting the other to death, and fortune had declared herself in favour of Mr. Johnson. Not only did this gentleman most vehemently insist upon his rights, but Wynd upon his part was perfectly willing to pay forfeit; and even after being 'worked off,' and resuscitated—when it became a very nice point of honour as to whether he was not free of his agreement—resented, as has been described, the interference of the watchmen, and expressed his readiness and even desire to suffer death. Of course the religious element was totally absent in this case, and what the poor wretch

expected was extinction. It is indeed impossible that persons not called upon to risk life by duty or necessity, should do so, as they often do, if the terror attached to the loss of it were so universal or so extreme. I remember being in the crowd at the corner of King William Street upon a certain Lord Mayor's day, just as the civic procession was about to pass by. The pressure was extreme, and there were cries and screams from all sides from women and children who were in danger of being crushed. It was difficult even for a strong man to keep his legs, and yet in the centre of us all was a street acrobat, balancing a pole of at least forty feet high, upon the top of which was his mate, pretending to swim, and performing all sorts of agile feats. Of himself, he could probably take care, like M. Blondin or any other professor of lofty tumbling; but his safety was solely and wholly dependent upon the man below; and any unexpected heave of the tossing throng, or even a policeman moving sharply through the press (as a policeman alone could do), would have been his death-warrant. Apart from this indifference to life in very many, to most of us who are accustomed to stand face to face with death, or who can contemplate, at leisure, his sure approach, his features lose much of their grisly terror. It is when he makes his sudden appearance, when totally unlooked for, that he shows himself the king, and we confess ourselves with such servility to be his subjects. Let one cry 'Fire!' in a theatre, and only some half-dozen of all the mighty concourse will retain their manliness.

I recollect such an occurrence, in a provincial town in the United States, where not only was the playhouse crammed with people, but the edifice was built of wood. This fact, so common in that out-of-the-way district that it probably had never occurred to one out of fifty of the audience before, seemed to strike them all at the first alarm. No stampede of frightened cattle could have been more complete than that frantic rush of human beings towards the doors. A gentleman in front of me had just left his place, taking out with him his wife and child. I had noticed that he was very white, and thought

he was unwell. He had been the first, as it afterwards turned out, to suspect the dreadful truth, but until he reached the open air he had not ventured to disclose it. If, with those helpless dear ones in his charge, he really foresaw what was to happen, I cannot blame him. Two or three others almost immediately afterwards strove to do the like, but in the meantime the fatal cry had been raised, from some one less prudent, in the boxes, and that whole mass of civilised, educated, Christian folk, in fashionable apparel and fine linen, was transformed upon the instant into a tribe of yelling savages.

For my own part, I had my wits sufficiently about me to know that to attempt egress through any one of the few narrow doors that offered, already choked with struggling hundreds, was mere hopeless frenzy. One man, and one only, in my immediate neighbourhood seemed to be of the same mind. He kept his place, a few seats off, with his eyes still fixed upon the stage, from which the performers had fled ; in a vast space already emptied of the late occupants, were we two alone, while at its edge the crowd shrieked and strove, and clambered one upon the other, while the smoke, from we knew not whence, began to gain consistence, and make a lurid glare, where before had been only splendour and brightness. Suddenly a flash of hope started through me, and then a shudder of fear, lest the same idea should strike others, and render my way of escape impracticable like the rest. Nothing but the panic in which all were plunged could account for the little door within the orchestra being forgotten. But the musicians did not happen to be in their places when the alarm was raised, and the space they occupied was shut in by a hoarding sufficiently high to prevent the little hole of ingress from beneath the stage from being seen. Out of sight it was thus forgotten altogether. As I stole towards it, I had to pass by this man, so philosophic and calm (as I had deemed him) in the midst of such deadly peril. I had been hitherto behind him, but one look at his face convinced me that his quiet did not at all events arise from fortitude. Large drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead ; his face

was livid ; his lips endeavoured to address me in vain. He was paralysed, as I now imagined, by excessive and abject fear. His eyes only, straining towards the orchestra door—which was even more hidden than it would otherwise have been, by the big drum—convinced me that he was aware of my intention, and even that he had anticipated it.

‘Take me with you, and I will give you ten thousand dollars,’ cried he in a hoarse whisper. ‘Take me with you, I say.’

There was a curious implication of threat and insolent demand in his deep hard tones that struck me even at that moment of haste and peril ; but I only answered : ‘Be silent, fool, and come on ; there is no time to lose.’

‘I am a cripple, and cannot stir,’ replied he. ‘Refuse me, and I will cry aloud to all these people, and then both you and they will be crushed to death.’

I swear that it was not his menace which moved me to take him upon my shoulders. I was touched by his forlorn condition, paralysed as I now perceived he was in one of his limbs, and incapable even of rising without assistance.

‘Ten thousand dollars,’ whispered he into my ear ; ‘and a good deed, and a good deed.’

It was evident that he was a gentleman engaged in commercial pursuits, or, at all events, one accustomed to estimate profits in all their bearings.

So engaged were the rest of the people in the body of the house in their terrible conflict—for such the struggle had by this time become—that they did not pay any attention to us two upon our way to the orchestra ; but it was a long business getting my helpless burthen over the high barrier, and no sooner had I accomplished it than I heard an inarticulate cry of rage and desire break forth behind us, which told me that our intention was guessed. Then there came a storm of feet. Now, the door of exit was so very small, that no person could pass through it without stooping ; the carrying a man out upon shoulder-back was out of the question, so I had to push my companion feet foremost before me, just as though he had

been something inanimate, like a wheel-barrow. This, of course, took time ; and I had hardly got him well through, and had emerged myself, when the maddened throng were upon us. It was the most terrible sight the imagination can conceive. In eagerness and fury, the poor, wretched people came on like blood-hounds, not indeed thirsting for *our* lives, but each bent upon saving his own, no matter at whose expense. There were scarcely any women among them. Only the strongest and least encumbered could have cleared the many rows of seats and the orchestra partition in that marvellously short time. But, alas, all their labour was in vain. They came upon the low aperture a struggling, knotted mass, and could no more make their way through it than if there had been no opening whatsoever. I saw this as I cast one hurried glance behind me, ere I made for a dull light, which was *not* fire, gleaming at the far end of the dark space in which we found ourselves. In another minute, we were safe in a narrow lane outside the theatre. Setting down my living burden, I rushed round to the main entrance, where, as I expected, the street was already densely crowded, for the tidings of the catastrophe had spread far and wide. But as yet there was not a gleam of flame to be seen ; only the same knotted throng I had just seen twisting and coiling out of the single door of egress, and a dreadful agonised murmur among the spectators, who knew not how to help them. To stand back, and give room for escape was all that could be done. I seized a fireman by the arm, and in a few seconds put him in possession of what was happening at the back of the house.

He hastily communicated with his superior, and in less time than it takes to tell it, both ends of the lane were guarded, to keep it clear ; and half-a-dozen men with axes and crowbars were detailed to enter the place beneath the stage, and break down the orchestra planking that imprisoned those unfortunates. Many of them were cruelly maimed, but not a single death occurred either there or elsewhere. The rush after our two selves had diverted a mass of people from the choked passages,

and in time set them free, although, had the fire increased apace, but few indeed would have escaped. The house was very full of smoke, but this was traced to a lumber-room above stairs, where some stage properties were smouldering; but this was nipped in the bud before it blossomed into the direful flower, flame. Still, I shall never forget that scene of panic. As for my paralysed friend, he found the means of locomotion from the spot where I had placed him; and I heard of him the other day, for the first time, at a party of savans and philosophers here in London, where the question of the value set upon life by its possessors was being debated, and especially the subject—which heads this paper—of *Buying Life*. Cases such as I have instanced, where it had been bought, absolutely purchased by money, were cited, and among them a curious adventure in an American theatre, where a rich man, who was a cripple, had bribed a stranger, upon an alarm of fire, to carry him out like another Anchises upon his pious shoulders—for ten thousand dollars!

‘Sir,’ said I, to the cosmopolitan gentleman who was telling this anecdote—picked up, he confessed, he knew not from what source—‘the man you speak of got even a cheaper bargain than you represent; for if he did purchase his safety at the price you mention, I can inform you upon the best authority that he never paid the money.’

This personal experience of my own elicited others bearing upon this matter, and two of a very interesting character. They had both reference to the purchasing of life at sea.

Some years ago, when the communication between England and Ireland was not so rapid or so frequent as at present, a gentleman of some property, whom we will call Mr. Handsworth, embarked at Liverpool for Dublin in a sailing packet, which (most fortunately for himself) did not happen to carry his majesty’s mails. His constitution was delicate, and so greatly affected by sea-sickness, that before he had been at sea a couple of hours he broke a blood-vessel. There was a surgeon on board

who did all he could for him, but the sea was rough, and the vessel pitched exceedingly, for the wind was almost dead against her.

‘It is my duty to tell you, Mr. Handsworth,’ said this gentleman gravely, ‘that it is impossible you can ever reach Ireland alive.’

‘Of that I am well convinced,’ returned the patient despondingly; ‘and my sufferings are such that I hope death is not far off.’

But the sick man’s wife took the doctor aside, and said: ‘If the vessel put back to Liverpool, when the wind would be behind us, and we should reach land in an hour, would there not be hope for my husband then?’

‘Certainly there would,’ returned he. ‘But the thing could not be done. There are many persons on board to whom time is of importance——’

‘Surely not of such importance as is to us,’ interrupted the lady plaintively. ‘We are rich, doctor; and I would cheerfully give all we have to save my husband’s life.’

‘How much can you promise?’ enquired the other. ‘Be sure I do not ask this for my own sake; but it is necessary that I should know.’

So the lady made a hasty calculation of what she and her husband had to offer for the redemption of his life, and the doctor left the cabin to see what could be done.

At first the skipper stoutly declared that to put back was out of the question; that it was as much as his place was worth; that he had his duty to perform to his owners; and finally, that even if such were not the case, there were the passengers, any one of whom objecting to return would settle the matter, since he would have good ground for action against the packet company.

‘Very true,’ said the doctor; ‘but if I can come to terms with the passengers, promise me that you yourself will not be deaf to reason and humanity, and, let us say, five hundred pounds.’

‘Well,’ rejoined the skipper, ‘if you can persuade all the passengers, fore and aft, I dare say the poor gentleman will not have to lay his death at my door. The sum

you mention will amply repay all concerned with the ship, and if less suffices, I will return the difference.'

So the doctor convened a meeting of the passengers, and set before them in simple but moving terms the exact state of the case, bringing forward the wife of the patient to corroborate his statement, and perhaps, too, with the design of making a greater impression upon their feelings. The few gentry and rich persons who were on board acquiesced in the humane arrangement, and the poor, to their honour, were for the most part not one whit behind them. Only one or two murmured (but grumbling rather than actually refusing) of what they should lose by the delay.

'Nobody shall lose,' said the doctor; 'all reasonable claims shall be allowed. I am sure there is no man here who will take advantage of a fellow-creature's hour of need to exaggerate his loss.'

The doctor was right. Although there were a large number of fore-cabin passengers, less than double the sum which he had offered to the captain sufficed to obtain the consent of every soul on board. The vessel was put back at once, and Mr. Handsworth's life was saved.

I will conclude this paper with even a still more curious instance of *Buying Life*, which likewise occurred at sea. Without intelligence and science, it is true that even money would in this case have been useless; but *without* money, life must have been lost. The circumstances are as follows.

Not many years ago, a young Englishman of the name of Chapman, enjoying a good position in commercial life in Calcutta, was obliged, on account of failing health, to return to his native country. It was considered by his medical attendants that a long sea-voyage would likely be beneficial, so instead of going the overland route, he embarked in a vessel which went 'round the Cape.' Very soon after he had started, however, it became evident that his physicians had been mistaken. The motion of the ship produced excessive nausea, weakness, and finally total prostration. He loathed every kind of

nourishment, and what was given him did him no good. By the time he reached the Cape, indeed, he was worn to a shadow, and was carried out and placed in an hotel at Cape Town more dead than alive, while the steamer went on without him. Here, under the skilful attendance of a certain surgeon, whom we will call Mr. Ayliffe, he gradually recovered, until he became not worse, although no better, than when he started from Calcutta. His mind was most anxiously fixed upon getting to England, where kind friends awaited him; and yet he was perfectly persuaded that directly he set foot on shipboard, his malady would return, and that it was out of all reason to imagine that he could ever reach home alive.

Under these circumstances, he was doomed to be an involuntary exile for life in Cape Colony; for the land journey across Africa, including as it did the Mountains of the Moon and the Desert of the Great Sahara, was not one to be undertaken by an invalid. Among the singular positions in which even civilised man is still occasionally placed, this of Mr. Chapman's was surely one of the most remarkable. All the king's horses and all the king's men, as the ballad says, could not convey or convoy him by land; all the steamships and all the sailing-vessels could not take him by sea. His case defied the improvements and scientific discoveries of the nineteenth century, and indeed appeared to be hopeless. Nothing remained for him but to marry and 'settle.' English ladies are scarce in that locality, and he might have had even to penetrate to Caffraria, and ally himself with a Hottentot, or, worse, have a Boer for a brother-in-law. I defy my readers to guess how Mr. Thomas Chapman escaped from these perils, and arrived in England safe and sound; but yet—and remember I am telling a perfectly true story—he did so.

Touched by his patient's yearning after home, Mr. Ayliffe had turned over in his own mind all sorts of devices to obtain this desired end, and at last he hit upon the right one. He caused a sort of four-post bed to be constructed, with curtains that shut closely all about it; and upon the arrival of the first ship with a vacant cabin,

he suspended the whole affair to the ceiling thereof by means of a ball-and-socket chain. In this curtained room, as one may call it, Mr. Chapman was placed ; and he arrived in England without having suffered the least sickness. The ball-and-socket arrangement accommodated itself to every movement of the ship, so that he maintained his level ; while the close-drawn curtains prevented him from perceiving that other things lost their equilibrium.* In fact, he was not able to perceive that he was on board a ship at all. I do not know how much the apparatus cost, nor what sum his gratitude dictated to be paid to the wise surgeon ; but it is certain that with that money he ransomed himself from exile, and bought his life.

* It has been said that a device of a similar kind was used by George IV., to prevent sea-sickness in his yacht-expeditions, but without such complete success. Yet surely it would be well worth the while of wealthy folks who suffer from this ailment, and have to make long voyages, to take advantage of whatever mitigation this plan may afford.





MRS. R.'S ADVENTURE.

AS it is my intention to describe one of the most thrilling incidents which ever occurred in the existence of any lady moving in the upper circles of society, and as that lady is myself, the public must kindly content themselves with the above heading. They will be doubtless desirous to learn the name in full of the heroine of so tremendous a catastrophe—being a female myself, I can easily pardon so natural a curiosity—but I cannot furnish more than the initial letter. My nerves are not what they were previous to the overwhelming experience about to be narrated, and I feel that I am not equal to the further trial which publicity would entail upon me. I could not receive the thousand-and-one expressions of sympathy which would certainly flow in, after such a revelation, from all quarters—deputations from numbers of my own sex and position in life—condolences, very likely, from Royalty itself—subscriptions, addresses, a memorial fund, and perhaps even a monument.

If the feelings, doing such honour to our common nature in the case supposed, should take that very permanent form of expression I have last mentioned—a monument, erected in memory of my unparalleled sufferings, it would undoubtedly be that of a stone omnibus—for it was when travelling in an omnibus that this torture was endured—a granite 'bus, as it seemed to poor, friendless me, at the time, with driver of black marble (but of

him I only saw the boots through the inside window), and with a conductor of impenetrable adamant.

I do not belong to a rank of society, please to understand, which is in the habit of using public conveyances, and far less 'buses, at all. When I wish to take the air or go a-shopping, I 'touch a bell,' like Mr. Secretary Stanton, and observe: 'The brougham at 3 or 4,' as the case may be, and it comes to the door accordingly; but my husband having been less pressed by professional business of late than usual, and the last few mornings being fine, he had observed: 'Let us have no brougham but Vaux;' and although I did not quite understand his meaning, I was very well content to accompany him on foot, for it is not always one can get a husband to go shopping.

He had been in my company to sit for a crystal cube portrait, to give me on our marriage-day; and all seemed sunshine, as it sometimes does when the greatest misfortunes are awaiting. No sooner had we left the establishment in question at Charing Cross, than it began to rain—one of those sudden and violent downfalls, which really seem to be the result of some accident in the main of nature's water-works—as though the grandmother of all buckets, as the Persians say, was emptying; and our cry was 'Cab, cab, cab!' and still they did not come. No two expressions in the human face divine are perhaps more different than the look of a cabman who wants a fare, and the look of a cabman when he doesn't. In the one case, he is sprightly, intelligent, obliging, eager; in the other he is morose, phlegmatic, repulsive, as though all the world was indeed the orange to which it is so often likened, and he had squeezed it flat, and there was nothing more to be got out of it. He takes no notice of cries, gestures, importunities of half-drowned persons, for it is *his* turn now to be deaf to the solicitations of his fellow-creatures, and blind to all the signals of the human semaphore. Nay, he enjoys the sufferings of the non-umbrella'd, for, as my husband quotes from Milton or somebody, 'Fair is foul, and foul is *faire*,' with the London cabmen.

Although observing hitherto these unpleasant characteristics as an uninterested spectator only, and knowing nothing of their hideous attempts at overcharge, and dreadful language when withstood, except from hearsay, I have always hated cabmen and their cabs; but I could never have imagined that any vehicle, either upon two wheels or four, could have filled me with such unimaginable loathing as that with which I now regard a 'bus. I have said that we could get no cab, and the wet was pouring through my delicate parasol as through a sieve, when my husband suddenly exclaimed: 'Come, here's a roof, at all events,' and hailed a Notting Hill omnibus.

'Never!' exclaimed I.

'Come along,' cried he; 'don't be ridiculous;' and while still feebly resisting, I found myself on the step of this—this mammoth machine. On the step, but by no means inside. The machine, indeed, was large, but it was not large *enough*. I read afterwards, upon a scroll above the door, the startling fact that it was licensed to carry twelve insides; and I am sure they must have been all there besides the passengers. Four females were already within; and above the sea of crinoline, the hats and heads of six gentlemen were visible. My husband and myself, I was given to understand, would make up the party. I will not wound the sensibilities of my readers by describing my emotions during my passage from one end of that vehicle to the other. I will only say that—doubtless from experience of what it was best and kindest to do—every passenger gave my dress a pull as I squeezed by him; and that, when I reached the furthest corner, and sat down (if we may call it sitting), I registered a mental vow that I would not get out again until everybody else had done so. My husband followed, as the lawyers say, 'on the same side;' and if he had a square inch of sitting-room, it was as much as he had, and a good deal of that was sharp steel.

'My dear,' said I, perceiving the expression of his countenance, 'it's no use muttering those dreadful words; I can't help it. I can't make my crinoline smaller.'

'Well, then, I can't stand it,' replied he. 'I shall get

out, and go to the club. I'll tell the cad to put you down at Westbourn Terrace.'

'Oh, my goodness!' cried I, 'you are not going to leave me in this dreadful place alone.'

'The 'bus passes almost your very door,' says he; 'you cannot meet with anything unpleasant; it isn't as though there was nobody *in* the 'bus to protect you. [It certainly was not.] Have you got some money with you?'

'Yes,' returned I, with a sort of calm despair; 'I have got my purse; for I feel its silver clasp running into me, and hurting me very much.'

'That is all right,' said he, without thinking, I hope, of what he was saying; 'but I'm [something which I didn't quite catch] if I stand this any longer.'

The next moment I was alone—that is to say, there were fellow-creatures all around, but not a drop of sympathy which could be depended upon, among them all.

Hermit never was half so lone
As he who hath fellows, but friend not one—

and this is especially true of a lady of quality in a crowded omnibus. For some little time, the novelty of my situation prevented my feeling how forlorn I was. The rattle of this species of vehicle is not to be described by mere words, and is of a character to confuse the intelligence of the most collected. I suppose the class of persons who use 'buses delight in this rough music, or they would surely insist upon it being stopped. Close beside me was what I took at first to be some anatomical curiosity in a glass-case; but these were the legs of the driver, seen through a little window, as above mentioned; this spectacle also affords, I suppose, some pleasure, or it would surely be excluded from the view of the passengers. Ever since my husband's departure, the cad had never ceased to exclaim, in an excited and irritable manner, '*Rilloke . Rilloke !*' * by which artful exclamation, as I subsequently

* The exclamation which our fair correspondent describes must, we think, have been intended for *Royal Oak*, a public-house in Bayswater, which is a great halting-place for omnibuses.

made out, he was striving to lure some other person to occupy the superficies I have already alluded to ; but in this infamous purpose, I am happy to say, he did not succeed. Although unable to look out of window (*except* at the legs of the driver), by reason of intervening opaque bodies (the size, by-the-bye, of all my fellow-passengers was stupendous, although continued travel in such conveyances would, I should have imagined, produced tenuity), I was yet enabled to calculate by the time consumed that I must be getting near my destination. One or two persons having left the vehicle, I began to think that I might be able to extricate myself without much difficulty. So I felt for my purse, and by exertions, which I may fairly designate as 'superhuman,' managed to get it out of my pocket. First I felt in the gold department, simply because one's fingers always do get there when one wants the silver one. One never carries gold, when one goes out with one's husband shopping, for obvious reasons, and therefore I was not surprised to find none. Then I felt in the silver department ; and a shudder shook my frame, for there was nothing there. However, I always carry stamps, and the man would surely take twelve stamps instead of four-pence. Alas, that very morning I had given my sister all my stamps save one to put on a quantity of charity circulars she was posting ; and that one she had laughingly refused to take upon the ground that it had no gum on it, and looked as if it had been used before. *That doubtful stamp was all that I now found myself possessed of in the way of legal tender !*

Hot and cold, pale and flushed, fever-dry and damp with the dews of terror—all these physical changes took me one after the other, while mentally my reason was shaken to its very centre. I had never been in the position of an unprotected female before. I scarcely knew what it was to be without a coachman and footman within call. As to being *alone* and *penniless*, I could scarcely picture to myself the actual horrors of such a situation. At this moment, over the shoulder of my opposite neighbour, I beheld a prison-van pass by, as though it had been sent me for a sign. A little later, while I was still

devising scheme after scheme of escape, and dismissing one after the other as impracticable, a mob of people obstructed our progress, the figures in the foreground of which were a policeman and a lady elegantly dressed, the latter of whom had been taken up for shop-lifting. 'Sarve her right, Ma'am,' observed the only member of my own sex now left in the vehicle; and the uncompromising way in which she said it shattered in an instant the resolve I had formed of asking her—for the love of all she held sacred—to lend me a fourpenny-bit. I felt certain she would see me borne away to prison or the hulks, or whatever dreadful destination my circumstances might earn for me, without a pang of pity. I fancied I remembered the very words of some penal statute specially directed against persons who obtained a ride in a public conveyance *under false pretences*—the last three words in particular were impressed upon my memory. How many days would elapse, I wondered, before I should be permitted to communicate with my husband?

As for asking a strange gentleman to lend me fourpence, I was sure that I could never do that. I felt, to begin with, that I should scarcely be able to make myself heard in the turmoil, and that he would reiterate: 'What, Ma'am?' and make me repeat the dreadful request a dozen times.

And now we were getting awfully near the terrace for which I was bound. We passed through Westbourn Place, where there were many tradesmen's shops with which I dealt; and perhaps I could have persuaded the conductor to step with me into the grocer's or the hair-dresser's, and so get paid; but I dared not let these people know that I ever travelled in an omnibus; it would get all over the neighbourhood; no—anything was better than such a disclosure as that. Past the gleaming shops we rattled, and into the familiar terrace, within a stonethrow of my happy home!

'The lady for Westbourn Terrace,' cried the conductor, stopping the vehicle, and flinging open the door with a crash.

'Never mind,' said I, feebly—'never mind, my good

man; it's of no consequence; I'll go on a little further.'

'Just as you please, Ma'am,' returned the conductor, looking at me rather queerly; 'there's no hextra charge to the journey's end.'

'Thank goodness for that,' murmured I; 'I cannot, then, be declared a defaulter to a greater extent than fourpence. The offence is not increased by my sitting here; and surely procrastination is better than the immediate peril. By waiting until this horrid machine stops, I shall have an opportunity of private conference with this man, and my passionate appeal may move him.' Not, however, that I had much hope of this; for he was a hard and shining man, upon whom the rain seemed to have no effect beyond making him shine the more; and tears would probably be even less regarded.

After I had observed that 'It was of no consequence where I got out,' the other passengers all fixed their eyes upon me furtively, and although evidently strangers to one another, exchanged meaning looks among themselves. I knew very well what they were winking about. They concluded I was out of my mind; and when I thought of the dear children at home, flattening their noses against the drawing-room window, in hopeful expectation of their mamma's return, and of the loose money that was lying in my dressing-case, any smallest coin of which would be worth forty times its weight in virgin gold, if it was only in my pocket instead of *there*, I felt that I was very nearly going mad in reality. However, these wretches all got out, one after another; and I heard the conductor scramble over the roof of the vehicle, doubtless to tell his friend the driver what a queer fare they had got inside, who was determined to have her money's worth by going as far as it would take her. For one moment, the idea of taking the opportunity of the door being left unguarded, crossed my mind; but remembering how very dangerous I had always heard it was to attempt to leave a carriage while in rapid motion, I put aside that unworthy scheme with honest indignation. We were now going very fast, and thereby I learned by experience why

it is they pack people into omnibuses like figs in a drum. If this were not done, the inmates would be tossed violently from side to side, as *I* was, like parched pease in a frying-pan. I also learned for the first time on this occasion how very far London extends westward, and what a number of—I dare say respectable—persons live on the wrong side of Westbourn Terrace. At last, amidst a neighbourhood which appeared to have been built the day before yesterday, the machine stopped in front of an unfinished public-house, round which all the disreputable persons who could be gathered together in so out-of-the-way a district, appeared to be collected. The moment of confession had arrived, and I was not unprepared, by this time, to address the court—I mean the conductor—in mitigation. I stood on the step, and laid my laced parasol upon his arm, in order to emphasise the statement that my husband had forgotten to leave with me the amount of my fare.

‘The gentleman,’ said I, ‘who got out in Regent Street—’

‘All right, Mum,’ interrupted the man, touching his hat, I am bound to say, with civility and discernment. ‘*He* paid for you, ’cos he said it would save trouble.’

I thought I should have fainted with joy. Save trouble! He had preserved my reputation, my liberty, my very life, perhaps! I never felt so truly glad that I was married, never so thoroughly appreciated the advantages of a husband. It was fortunate that this feeling overwhelmed all others, or I do think, in the first burst of gratitude, I should have embraced that hard and shining man. Instead of that, however, I merely observed: ‘Can I get a cab? I want to go to Westbourn Terrace.’

‘Well, upon my life!’ exclaimed he, slapping his leg. Then turning to the reddest of all the red-nosed throng around us, he added: ‘Jem, bring your cab up; here’s a fare.’

While the cab was being brought up, I once more retired into the interior of the machine, and heard the conductor explaining to his friends the peculiar idiosyncrasy of the lady inside.

‘Man and boy,’ said he, ‘I a bin with ’buses thirty year ; but I never seed nothin’ like this. Now, she’s a-going back, and you may depend upon it she’ll be here again’ [I shuddered] ‘before the day’s out. She’s what they call a many-moniac. There’s been nothing like her, in a public conveyance, since Mr. Hunt——’

Here the vehicle arrived, and I made my escape ; but I quite agree with what that conductor was about to observe. Nothing so terrible has occurred in a public conveyance since the criminal alluded to poisoned a whole cabful of people, as that adventure of mine in the Notting Hill ’bus.





A THREE-LEGGED IMPOSTOR.



E are all familiar with that indomitable sailor who, notwithstanding the severity of the season (and, indeed, the colder it is, the better it suits him), sits with (apparently) *no* legs upon the pavement, while before him is spread a highly-coloured illustration of the catastrophe (the blowing up of a three-decker in action) by which he lost his limbs; we are also acquainted with his less interesting nautical brother, who, with but (apparently) *one* leg, limps along our streets, with a doleful ditty describing the circumstance (a cannon-ball or a fall from the mast-head) to which he is indebted for *his* mutilation; but a *three-legged* impostor has not yet been palmed off even upon that credulous world, the indiscriminate charity-bestowers of our large towns; and it is with some hope of imparting novel information that we beg to introduce this designing tripod to our readers. Many of them have doubtless already heard of it. A popular periodical, very accurately described the fair monster, several months ago, in temperate and judicial language; for it is (I blush to say it) of the female sex, and that fact perhaps softened the heart of a too impressionable editor; but the fact is, and should be made public, that *Planchette* (for that is her name) is an infamous creature, clothed with lies; and whoever purchases her, under a contrary impression, will find themselves grievously mistaken. It is true that even her

patrons allow that she is not trustworthy ; that her statements are wild and wayward ; but her moral obliquity is not what we complain of : if she would only speak, if it were but to say to her purchaser : ' You ninny ' (which, by-the-bye, would be the reverse of a false word), I should be content. But she says *nothing* ; and my ten-and-sixpence has been extracted from me under worse than false pretences.

Let me give a description of this offender, that the public may recognise her at first sight, and being forewarned, be forearmed. Planchette, then, is a board, shaped like a heart, about eight inches long by seven wide in its widest part ; she is supported on three legs—namely, on two pentagraph wheels (on which she moves about, when pushed, very freely), and one soft pencil, with which she writes (or rather is said to write) her mystic statements. The method is to place Planchette upon a sheet of white paper or cardboard ; then two persons lay their hands very lightly on her, and after a bit, say her admirers, she will resolve any question propounded by a third person. Having read the account, already alluded to, of this female phenomenon, I enquired of my friends if she was known to any of them. Several of them replied in the affirmative. Planchette could not only tell the past, but the future ; and as for the present, matters passing on the other side of the globe were just as much within her ken as what was going on in the same room with her. But all this was hearsay. Only two of my friends spoke from personal experience of the witch ; one, an accomplished lady ; the other, not only a scholar, but (what was more singular in such a case of credulity) a man of quickness and humour. The stories they told of Planchette (and which it is certain they believed) were marvellous. She had revealed to them the death of a friend in another hemisphere at the hour of his demise, and indicated the priest who attended him in his last moments. But, indeed, by their own account, she performed such miracles in their presence, that when one of my two informants said : ' I could never have believed it if I

had not seen it,' I hastened to intrench myself behind that rampart likewise—and am holding that position to this hour. There was no pretence of this tripod's being exclusively spiritual in her manifestations. She did not concern herself solely with death, or other serious subjects, but would condescend to light banter and commonplaces. In this last phase, however, she was sometimes quite as striking as when employed in the annihilation of time and space to make two lovers (of the marvellous) happy. I give an instance, related to me, it should be borne in mind, by a gentleman whose word about any other matter would never be doubted, and who, in this case very seriously pledged it to the truth of what he told. Planchette (of whom he honestly avowed his belief that she was an emissary of the devil) had taken, perhaps on that account, a peculiar enmity to him, and delighted in issuing libels against him—whether scrawling them on cardboard with the help of pentagraph wheels constitutes 'publication,' is a point I am not lawyer enough to decide—and, in particular, in inventing about him very incredible and foolish lies. A friend of his, at the other end of London, who gave up a good deal of time to the tripod, drove over to him one day, when the lady I have mentioned (a near relation of his) happened to be staying in his house. 'O Smith,' said he (or let us suppose so, for O. Smith was not his real name), 'what do you think my Planchette has been saying about you this morning?'

'Something very false and very silly, I have no doubt,' returned Smith, who, however, if he had known of any efficacious form of exorcism, would certainly have used it. 'What did the demon say?'

'Well, I was just passing a few minutes with her after breakfast—you know, she talks to me alone quite freely—and asked her, amongst other things: "What is Smith, your enemy, doing just now?" "He's mending his boots with a poker," scrawled she immediately, as fast as she could.—Just fancy! could malignity of invention take a more ludicrous form than that?'

'But this is most extraordinary,' exclaimed Smith and the lady simultaneously, and looking at one another in

blank dismay ; for the fact was, that Smith had gone out that morning (it being a wet one) in goloshes ; and on his return, forgetting that his soles were india-rubber ones, had scraped his shoes as usual on the scraper, and thereby cut one of them. Being both ingenious and economical, he then much astonished the lady in question by coming into the parlour (where she was) heating the poker, and proceeding to cure his mishap by the process which surgeons call, or used to call, the actual cautery.

‘Why, you *did* mend your boots with a poker this very morning!’ exclaimed the lady.

‘I know I did,’ said he, more quietly. ‘I always said Planchette was a demon.’

I may here say that the most singular part of the Planchette mystery, as it seems to me, is now narrated : that two independent witnesses, a gentleman and a lady, whom I know to be honest and right-thinking persons, should agree to concoct a foolish falsehood, and to back it by the most serious asseverations, is almost as incredible as the story itself. Yet they either did so, or the story is true.

At all events, much excited by this statement, as well as by the other wonderful relations, I determined to procure a Planchette. In vain Smith assured me that I had better not, for that it was playing into the hands of the Evil One to ask her any questions.

‘Be she a spirit of health,’ returned I, ‘or goblin damned,
Bring with her airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be her intents wicked or charitable,’
And even though she cost me twelve-and-sixpence,
Planchette I’ll buy.

Planchette was rather exacting in her demands as compared with those of other wise women ; but then *their* business is mainly confined to maid-servants, whereas this lady was fashionable to an extreme degree. ‘I have sold,’ says one of the few who deal in this engaging tripod, ‘four hundred and sixty-six Planchettes, and have sent others abroad.’ And then think of her manifestations ! Even from the temperate account of her in the

periodical above referred to, I learned that she could tell you the text of Mr. Spurgeon's morning sermon any afternoon, although not (as I gathered) before it had been preached. She could tell you the letters (such as W. A. L. K. E. R., for instance) engraved on the inside of a locket, the very existence of which was unknown to any but one's self. It could indicate the persons you had written to any day, and even supply their Christian names, if you were ignorant of them, and were compelled to address '——Jones, Esq.' On the other hand, it showed an ignorance almost as surprising as its knowledge, for it was by no means good at spelling, and *insisted*, in spite of the best advice, upon writing commander with one *m*. 'Generally'—and I think this a *little* suspicious—'its blunders in orthography are the blunders of those whose hands are upon it. For example—it wrote a French word for me, and put an accent on it which should not have been there, because I believed it should be there; and in writing a Latin word for a lady, it spelled it as the lady thought it should be spelled—wrong.'

This frank avowal on the part of the writer of the paper rather attracted me than otherwise to the tripod; but when I had read a little book entitled *The Planchette, or Thought-writer, a Mystery*, the admission seemed quite superfluous, if not a base detraction from her virtues. I will leave out the spiritual opinions of the author of this last-named work—such as, 'I don't *know* what is mesmeric influence, but I believe it to be the direct breath of the Great Creator, and cannot be destroyed,' &c.—and stick to Planchette herself, of which this gentleman is the creator, *and who sells it*. There is nothing like leather.

Well, then, this disinterested individual informs us that, in spite of what one Mr. Bertolacci says, it is by no means immaterial of what wood the instrument is made, 'although this may be in *his* [Mr. B.'s] case, because his daughters are mediums of a very high degree; but there are thousands in whom the faculty is latent, and I submit that *they* require the instrument that years of experi-

ment and research have proved to be genuine and correctly constructed.' The author (and maker) is naturally not desirous to tell us how to turn out this instrument for ourselves. 'I will only say that the wood used must be hearty good stuff, and well dried. Laburnum, oak, ash, and many other woods will not serve, and are not rightly to be used. *Other conditions and instructions I reserve.*' [I again repeat, that notwithstanding even Miss P., there is nothing like leather.] 'As to the reason why these instruments write or draw, as they sometimes do exquisitely, I have long ceased to trouble myself: enough for me they are true; and I freely admit, that after many years' observation of the facts, I do not know whether the phenomena are spiritual, mesmeric, odic or vito-magnetic, and I therefore leave each person who studies the subject to his own opinion.' Taking advantage of the permission thus graciously accorded, I shall presently express my own opinion upon this matter, but in the meantime, let our author speak on. 'I use two woods in the manufacture of Planchettes—one is perfumed, scarce, and expensive; the other, of a cheaper and commoner kind. The cost of a Planchette is twelve-and-sixpence or seven shillings respectively.' It is not an American invention, as some persons, to the prejudice of Great Britain, have malignantly observed. 'It is French, as implied by its name "a little board." . . . It is no stranger to the French, Russian, and Spanish courts . . . and I have sold four hundred and sixty-six in England.' How any human turner or carpenter ever hit upon Planchette in the first instance, is not recorded in this pamphlet, although the present place of manufactory is very distinctly pointed out to possible purchasers; but her spiritual merits were discovered at least eight years ago, even at which period some folks were on sufficiently familiar terms with her, it seems, to call her 'Planchy.' Three of these 'tried it, without any result, and Planchy was put aside on a large sheet of paper till after dinner. You may judge their surprise when, on proceeding to resume their amusement, they found the following sentence written' [*sic*; our author often gives proof of deriving his

orthographic knowledge from Planchy] ‘on the previously blank paper: “Go to my son, and tell him that I will be with you this day month, to cause him to make such alterations as I wish in the book he is now writing.”’ Then followed the signature of an eminent personage deceased.

Our author himself, perhaps apprehensive that people might call upon him and require a sign, disclaims any personal power over the lady. ‘It might be supposed that, as I make the instrument, I can use it also; such, however, is not the case.’ The little touches of modesty to be found in this miraculous essay are indeed most charming. While eulogising Planchette’s surpassing qualities, he allows she has the feminine failing of occasionally telling fibs. ‘Not,’ says he, rather brutally, ‘that the instrument don’t tell lies sometimes; it states plainly that it does so; as, for instance, a few days since, I was with a lady of high rank’ [leather], ‘who was disappointed because the instrument I made would not write for her, but only make marks; she told me that, by a young lady laying *her* hand on it, it wrote a letter from her deceased mother full of serious advice; and that afterwards, some one present wished to know the winner of the coming Derby, the answer was: “I write lies as well as truth, and will not be troubled with such—non-sense.” This caused the young lady to desist, of course.’

Nay, our author has even the hardihood to print a letter from a customer to the effect that the instrument he first made for him, ‘about eight years ago, of mahogany, would not act, and the second only imperfectly;’ but ‘the third, my second quality, wrote messages from the late Robert Burns, and, without anyone touching the instrument, signed them.’ [I should like to compare the autograph of the deceased bard with Planchy’s spidery scrawls.] Another correspondent, a lady, states that ‘now (after a little practice) she never touches the Planchette, but ties a string to one of the casters, and it writes.’ But these two persons, even by our author’s own account, are favoured individuals, as we may learn from his *Directions for using the Planchette*:

‘Insert the pencil, and lay the instrument, wheels downward, on a sheet of foolscap or cartridge paper ; then quietly collect and bend your mind to the subject, and lay just the tips of the fingers of the right hand on the upper side for a few minutes, and if you have the power well developed, the Planchette will probably at first make irregular marks, and, after a little practice, give answers to mental and verbal questions.

‘If, however, after repeated trials—say, for about a month—you find that it will neither move, write, nor draw, and you do not perceive a sense of fulness in the fingers, nor any tremor of the hand or arm, nor a sense of pricking or stiffness in the fingers, you may fairly conclude that you have not the power to obtain answers by it (or, if you have, that it would require a longer time to develop it). I should advise you in that case to invite someone, the opposite to yourself in sex and temperament (if possible), to assist you, and both together proceed, as before directed, for a few minutes, and watch the result. If it does not move, join hands, the left in your friend’s right, and lay the disengaged hands on the Planchette. If neither influences can move it, let others try, and strictly attend to this—put the Planchette in the sun’s rays, if possible, for a few minutes, repeatedly turning it, and it will remove the influences THAT IT HAS ABSORBED, and restore it to its normal state.

‘This can at any time be done, if you have reason to suppose it has been handled by one inimical to the subject. On the supposition that you are able to obtain answers, my advice is, that you never after suffer anyone else to touch it ; prove it and treat it as your true friend ; never ask a trivial question, or you may expect a similar reply, or a reproof, or a morally wrong one ; for instance one relating to betting or horse-racing. In all probability, a correct answer would be given as a lure, with ruin for the future result, and this I know in several cases to have been the fact. Indeed, the instrument, strange to say, will teach you how to use it. Whether the influence projected on it be spiritual or vito-magnetic, I leave others to determine ; I cannot. This I

know, that entire manuscripts have been written by the Planchette, replete with interest, and not unfrequently it has given timely warning of disasters, that, by its means, have been prevented. One caution I request you to observe—do not place implicit faith in its teachings, and never forget, when not in use, to keep it in safety, as it cannot rightly be repaired; and in the dark, in a small case of lime-wood, or cedar (not pencil) is best; for, like homœopathic medicines, the light deteriorates it.'

One portion, at least, of these directions for use is likely to commend Planchette to the youth of both sexes. 'I should advise you to invite some one, the opposite to yourself in sex, if possible' [and surely this can never be *impossible*!], 'to assist you.' It must be a very nice amusement to place one's fingers in proximity to those of some agreeable young lady, and gaze into her lovely eyes until Planchette writes, which (to judge by my own experience) will last till any two persons, in the bloom of youth, shall become 'John Anderson my Jo' and his old woman, and even longer. As to an answer being given 'as a lure,' Planchette never cast any pitfall of that sort in *my* way. The notion of the sun's rays removing the antagonistic influences 'absorbed' by this ridiculous tripod, is charmingly audacious. Our author's faith—in the credulity of his fellow-creatures—must indeed be boundless. It is evident, with those four hundred and forty-six orders executed, and many more coming in (for the sale, of late, has greatly increased), that our author knows the folks he has to deal with, else one might well be astounded at his venturing to publish such testimony as the following by way of eulogium. One of his correspondents writes: 'Planchette only moves and scrawls about the paper for me alone, but I hope with patience to obtain satisfactory results: with several of my friends and me it does marvels. A young gentleman, a cousin of mine, manager of a bank in a neighbouring town, has wonderful power. It writes for him alone, when his fingers are a perceptible distance above the board. He is, however, a highly nervous, delicate man, and it is only

with difficulty we can get him to try his powers. In fact, he appears afraid of it, and it makes gloomy, ominous sentences under his influence, quite enough to give him reasonable grounds for his unwillingness to operate. On Sunday afternoon last, a musical friend was playing a serious strain on the piano in my house, my cousin had his hand on the board, and it wrote the following: "Come, Music, come, and sweetly give—soft influence to those who live—Oh Music—tired;" and then stopped.'

Is it possible that our author, or his correspondent, can be under the impression that this is poetry, and of such a high order as manifestly to originate from a supernatural source?

Perhaps, after all, I am unnecessarily wroth with Planchette; she is made to sell, and doubtless, whether she answers *me* or not, she answers the object of her maker. I am only one of the five hundred or more individuals who have been dazzled by her (reputed) charms, and suffered accordingly. I purchased the fair siren—more frail than fair, I am sorry to think—and even gave a little dinner-party in her honour. As soon as the cloth was removed, and without grace (lest that religious ceremony should have the effect of an exorcism), we began our séance. 'Two persons of opposite sex to one another, if possible,' laid their hands gently upon Planchette, while a third put his questions. Nothing happened of a supernatural nature; nothing happened at all. The individuals employed being conscientious, she never moved. Upon the substitution of one of these unfit personages, however, for a barrister of extensive practice, she did begin to scrawl over the cardboard, like a spider drunk. If she formed letters, they were hieroglyphics of the most unintelligible sort. A pencil, held between two fingers, would have made more definite marks. It was the most complete *fiasco* you can imagine. At last—all the questions having been hitherto unspoken—it was asked aloud how many of the five Fenians, at that time doomed to death at Manchester, would be executed. The lawyer and the Lady made a desperate combined effort, and the result

was something like four fingers, as one might draw them with one's toes.

'There!' cried somebody; 'there *is* something in it, after all. It is almost certain that one of the five will be reprieved.'

But, unfortunately for the reputation of Planchette, her prediction, as we are all aware, was not fulfilled.

One of the party was 'engaged,' and we asked for the name of his beloved object. This was also replied to by a symbol, very like nothing at all. Some thought it was intended for a profile. But I confess I could not recognise the human form divine, nor whether it was her face or her figure that was intended to be portrayed.

At last, after hours of scrawling, one, who was about to rejoin his regiment in India, enquired how many years it would be before he again came home, and the answer, so far as it could be gleaned—was a hundred thousand years; there was something like a one, and five loops that might stand for ciphers or anything else. Then we gave up Planchette for the evening.

I have tried her often since with no better result. If she **is** a devil, she is a dumb one. In the magazine-article aforesaid, it is stated that the usual sign of her having finished her communications is, 'a sort of circular flourish round the writing.' She gives me plenty of flourishes circular and of all sorts, but no writing. I have asked Smith and the lady to come and draw Planchette out. The former has 'conscientious' objections; and the latter has objections also, I suppose, for she don't do it.

Does anybody want to buy a Planchette, cheap? because, if so, I should like to trade. She is much the same, I believe, as when she came to me, and yet I am prepared to part with her at a great reduction. I don't think she has absorbed any antagonistic 'influences'—either odic or vito-magnetic—from me and my friends; but if she has, I will place her in the sun's rays with pleasure. I will also guarantee that she will tell no lies. Who'll buy my three-legged impostor?



WANTED A DRIVER.

THAT the law is equally severe upon rich and poor alike when they do wrong, is a theory which nobody believes. It is so in the case of great offences, or rather, it is then of necessity *more* severe upon the rich ; for no one will deny that—their offences being equal—a term of penal servitude is a greater punishment to an Old Bailey attorney than it is to one of the class whom it is his ordinary mission to defend. But what in the mouth of the private soldier is rank blasphemy is in that of the captain but a choleric word, and so it must ever be in this world, notwithstanding that the angels weep to see it ; nay, times have been, when what was shop-lifting in the distressed needle-woman, was in the lady of fashion kleptomania. There is no more fear of social position being ‘respected’ than of the sun being shorn of its beams ; the anarchical periods when it ceases to be so being about as few, as brief, and as far between, as are total eclipses. Mr. Tennyson, while confessing himself ‘a Tory to the quick,’ narrates how, when at school, he stole ‘the fruit, the hens, the eggs’ of a flayflint in his neighbourhood ; nay, he and his fellows even stole his sow, and hauled her, great with pig, up to the leads upon their college tower ; and when she farrowed, one by one they took her progeny and roasted them, until she was ‘left alone upon her tower, the Niobe of swine.’ This was really a very strong measure, and nothing is more certain than that, if the

culprits had been workhouse boys instead of young gentlemen, they would have been sent to gaol, and we should have had some graphic reminiscences of Pentonville in the Laureate's *Ode to Memory*.

Poaching, a crime so dire in the 'eyes severe' of the justice, has seemed to himself, in his third and fourth age, a venial offence enough, and one the discovery of which only entailed 'a row' between his 'governor' and some neighbouring squire; but poor Hodge is punished, notwithstanding his youth, by hard labour and the treadmill. I don't know how much truth there is in the assertion, commonly made by the poor in London, that 'the bobbies' are unjust; but the difference of tone in which that supposed embodiment of even-handed justice, the policeman, addresses a man with a good hat and a man with a bad one, is without doubt very marked.

Certainly, a person of position, with money and friends behind him, may venture to do things which might bring very unpleasant consequences to a less fortunate person. He may no longer wrench off knockers and bell-handles, and keep a museum of such stolen property with impunity, as young gentlemen of fashion were wont to do half a century ago; and if, while driving his mail phaeton in the park at dangerous speed, he is requested by the guardian of the law to slacken his pace, and the temptation seizes him not only to disobey, but to apply his whip-lash to the shoulders of the blue-coated one—he will have to repent of it in sackcloth, or at least in prison garb: his money (very properly) shall be of no avail; the magistrate will in these days take no fine; and for that mad freak, his head shall assuredly be shaved, or at least cut uncommonly close by the warder's shears. Still, let us who are of the upper ten thousand be of good heart. The law will still think twice before it condemns persons of our condition, when it would not hesitate at all in the case of the vulgar.

It is whispered that one of her majesty's judges, in his youth—or at least before his judgment was matured—was so imprudent as to steal a horse. It was absolutely a matter of extreme doubt—his attorney called it 'a very

narrow shave'—whether his lordship would not have to be called to the wrong side of the bar; but, however, a miss is as good as a mile, and he is now on the bench. It is something to have stolen a horse, and yet to be a judge; but an incident happened to a gentleman of my acquaintance the other day which even still more exemplifies the advantages of position. He is only a barrister to be sure, and not 'my lud;' but on the other hand, he stole a horse *and cab!*

In this wise. Mr. Nathaniel Carmairs, as we will call him, is, by nature, doubtless as little inclined to larceny (let alone more serious offences) as any other gentleman in Stone Buildings. Being a lawyer, it would perhaps excite ridicule to call him strictly honest; but apart from his professional practice (which is not large), I never heard a whisper against his principles. Even if his intentions were less honourable, indeed, he is too fond of repose, to what the wise do call 'convey' what belongs to others into his own keeping; if it could be done by absorption, I might have my doubts; but he would scarcely lift a finger (far less a shop) for the sake of gain, nor even to defend his own, so long as enough was left him upon which to live with comfort. If ever there was a philosopher since the good old Grecian days, it was Nathaniel Carmairs; in whom, said his enemies, was united the keenest epicurean sense of self-gratification, with the most stoical indifference to the misfortunes of others. But one of the advantages of being a philosopher is not to care what one's enemies say, which was the case with Nathaniel. The opinion of his friends may be equally valueless; but I cannot help saying, that he has always seemed to me to be much too good-natured to deserve so harsh a judgment, and I only wish that everybody who talked as little said as few malicious things. There is a story told of him at his club in connection with a railway accident, which is very characteristic. On the *Great London and Shatterham* line there is a tunnel very favourable to collisions, and which, although a long one, has already cost the company more in compensation to their victims than they expended in its original con-

struction. But a board of directors is not a body to be dictated to by experience; and in the summer months, when the accident-season is at its height, the Shatterham tunnel is sure to create its sensation. Mr. Carmairs, having a villa residence upon this line of railway, uses it very frequently, and at last, of course, came in for the accident. He was all alone, and fast asleep, in a first-class carriage, when his train met another train face to face in the tunnel, with the usual results. He described himself as being rudely awakened by a clap of thunder, followed by an earthquake, which shook his compartment until it became more like a bundle of spills than a place adapted for repose. All was pitch-dark, save for a few glimmering lamps; and the cries of the wounded, or of those who fancied themselves wounded, reminded him (for he has no little knowledge of music) of nothing so much as the *Battle of Prague*. It was of no use appealing to any of the company's servants to bring him another carriage; the cruel necessity had arisen for personal exertion; and my friend resolved to act with vigour. He made his way amongst the *débris* of vehicles and people, until he discovered another first-class carriage in a tolerably intact condition, climbed up in it, placed his umbrella in the cradle, and his hat in the straps, put on his travelling-cap, and *fell fast asleep again*.

It is impossible to imagine that a gentleman of this placid disposition could wilfully commit a crime. But some men are born thieves; others achieve for themselves a reputation for thieving; and a few have felonies thrust upon them. This last was the case with Nathaniel Carmairs. On the occasion which I have in my mind, he had been dining at a friend's house in the neighbourhood of Clapham, and did not leave its hospitable gate till the small-hours. Perhaps his host was a congenial spirit, and they both fell asleep after dinner, and did not wake till 2 A.M.; but, at all events, it was past that time when my friend found himself in the wilds of Clapham, and he knew not how many miles from Lincoln's Inn. The notion of *walking* that distance was not repugnant to Mr. Carmairs's feelings, simply because the possibility of the

thing never entered into his mind. He had too good an opinion of the general system of the universe to suppose that a person of his consequence could be driven to that extremity. He confidently looked forward to be driven in a cab. His friend had informed him that there was a night cab-stand at a particular place, and thither he strolled, nothing doubting, and with a cigar in his mouth.

Nor had he been deceived ; the cab-stand was there ; a long strip of pavement to prevent the horses standing on wet ground ; and the bucket belonging to the waterman. Nay, there was even a hansom casting its weird shadow in the moonlight. But as for a driver, there was none to be seen. We have it upon Mr. Carmairs's own testimony that he 'called aloud' for this 'missing link' between himself and the horse, but nothing came of it except a bray from the common. 'It was not an echo,' says Nathaniel, anticipating satire, in his quiet way ; 'it was a donkey.'

Having summoned the absent cabman three times, Mr. Carmairs, although not of the common-law bar, concluded he had done all that was legally necessary, and deliberately climbed up into the vacant seat, and drove away. A more timid person might have shrunk from the responsibility of such an act ; a more mercurial one might have exulted in it, as in any other mischievous prank ; but Mr. Carmairs only felt that he was performing an irksome duty in the unjustifiable absence of the proper official. As he drew nearer town, he was more than once hailed by benighted revellers ; but he had no desire to make a penny by the transaction in which he was engaged, and refused every one of them. 'Tired,' 'Going home,' or a shake of the head whenever that response was found sufficient, were replies that shook off these importunate persons ; although if he could have relied upon any of them to drive *him*, he would have surrendered the reins with cheerfulness, got inside and been asleep in a moment, and when they reached Chancery Lane, a man should have had both horse and hansom for his trouble. But although these would-be fares strove to tempt him by pecuniary offers, as well as propositions to 'stand' a pot

of porter, and even spirits, it never struck them to make the particular overture that Mr. Carmairs would have listened to but which he himself could scarcely propose. The consequence was they had to console themselves with satire ; reflections upon his white cravat and embroidered shirt-fronts, which they maintained had been feloniously acquired through the circumstance of his mother being a washerwoman ; or upon his elegant gold waistcoat buttons, which they did not hesitate to stigmatise as brass ; while he, on his part, had to drive himself all the way. Arrived at Lincoln's Inn, he left the horse and cab at the gate, for the convenience of any other member of the bar who might be in need of a vehicle, and went quietly to bed.

I doubt whether Nathaniel Carmairs ever gave himself a thought about that horse and cab again, for he is of a very forgiving disposition, and always endeavours to forget any trouble he may have been put to ; at all events, he never mentioned it to *me* ; and as I happened to be at his chambers when the following interview took place, it afforded me some considerable surprise, as well as amusement.

Nathaniel was hard at work as usual — colouring his pipe — and I was watching him, for it was too hot for active exertion, when there came a knock at the door, and immediately after it, two persons of the lower orders. The one looked like a Methodist parson out of employment ; the other wore a white hat, a red neckerchief, a green waistcoat, a buff coat, and a pair of old drab trousers, with an enormous patch of new drab on the left knee ; he did not therefore require the metal ornament round his neck to proclaim himself the driver of a handsome cab, who, as everybody knows, are, except the military, the gayest dressers in London.

'You know what I am come about, Mr. Carmairs,' observed this rainbow in a menacing voice ; 'or if not, here is my solicitor, who can inform you.'

'Take your seats, gentlemen,' said Nathaniel ; 'it is not often that I see a solicitor in these chambers, I do assure you.'

‘You were at Clapham, this day-week, Sir, as I am informed,’ observed the person in black severely; ‘and on that night, or rather on the following morning, between the hours of two and three, you took a horse and cab from the public stand near the *Roysterers’ Arms*.’

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Carmairs yawning, ‘I did; but not being before the court at this particular moment, is it necessary, my dear Sir, to be so tedious? My friend here is a professional man; this forensic display is therefore thrown away.’

‘He owns that he was at Clapham; he owns that he stole the cab,’ cried the man in black, moistening his lips in preparation for another flight of eloquence: ‘now, see what follows.’

‘He is going to weary us,’ said Carmairs in an agonised tone; ‘I know he is.—Now, cabman, listen to me, if you can direct your attention from your learned friend for half a minute.—[For he was looking at ‘my solicitor’ as though he were the embodiment of the wisdom of the Court of Chancery, Ecclesiastical, and Common Law in one.] ‘I dare say, you are under the impression that you have a grievance: there—there—I thought so. Well, as a matter of fact, you have none: it is I, and not you, who ought to complain. But sooner than have to listen to you, and still more to this other gentleman, I will give you—what I very seldom get myself—a guinea. There.’

So saying, the philosopher languidly tendered those two coins, the combination of which is so dear to the physician and the barrister (and, indeed, is generally acceptable to all conditions of men)—a sovereign and a shilling.

The cabman’s eyes grew bright as his raiment, and his hand mechanically sought his forelock in the act of grateful obeisance. He would certainly have taken the money, had not ‘my solicitor’ intervened.

‘Not so fast,’ said this learned gentleman, who had no idea of giving up a case just because his client was satisfied: ‘you are not going to get off so easily as that, Mr. Carmairs. It is in our power to punish you very severely, and the compensation, if we forbear to do so, must be proportionate to the offence.’

'I *knew* he was going to be weary,' sighed Nathaniel, putting the coins back into his purse, and shutting his eyes: 'will you kindly wake me when he has done?'

'I suppose, Sir,' continued the man of law with pompous gravity, 'notwithstanding you affect to treat this affair with levity, that you know the fact?'

'The act that relates to cabmen leaving their vehicles on the street without any one to look after them?' murmured Mr. Carmairs dreamily. 'Yes; it's a misdemeanour, isn't it?'

At these pregnant words the cabman and 'my solicitor' held a whispered but animated conference, and then the latter proposed his *ultimatum*. 'I am instructed to say, Sir, that for the sum of five pounds, we will abstain from further proceedings, the mere publication of which, as you are well aware' [how little he knew Nathaniel!], 'must seriously affect your reputation. Considering the expenses my client has been put to, I can say no smaller sum, which also includes our loss of time.'

'You are losing it now,' responded Mr. Carmairs yawning; 'and what is worse, you are losing mine. You oblige me to recapitulate—which of itself, in the present state of the atmosphere, is an exhausting word. Your friend commits a misdemeanour by leaving his cab; I do not prosecute him for it; I have no intention of prosecuting him for it, although it caused me great inconvenience, by compelling me to drive myself home. I return good for evil, by offering the offender one pound one.'

'We want five pounds,' observed 'my solicitor' drily.

'Just so,' continued Mr. Carmairs with a faint smile. 'We all *do*. The majority of us, however, do not have their aspirations realised. I most sincerely wish you may get it—out of somebody else.'

'Come, Sir, what *will* you give?' enquired 'my solicitor,' suddenly exchanging his menacing gloom for an agreeable frankness. 'The fare from Clapham, to begin with, is three-and-six.'

'Now, look here,' said Mr. Carmairs, speaking with what was for him considerable distinctness and effort, and holding his hands out, as if for air; 'a gleam of reason

seems to have penetrated into what, I dare say, you call your brain. Take advantage of that lucid interval, and accept these terms, which are the last which I shall offer you. I put aside all the trouble and exertion which your client's carelessness entailed upon me on the occasion in question. *I make no charge for driving myself home.* Here is a half-crown and a shilling in satisfaction of all demands. Do you take them, or do you leave them ?'

'My solicitor' placed his head upon one side, with an embarrassed air, and scratched it thoughtfully. But 'cabby' stepped briskly forward, and before the other could interfere, had transferred the proffered coins to his own pocket, concluding that manœuvre with a slap upon their place of deposit, which evidently meant : 'Signed, sealed, and delivered ;' and so the transaction terminated.

Upon the whole, and considering the attempt that was undoubtedly made to extort money, perhaps no less was done than the justice of the case demanded. But supposing Mr. Nathaniel Carmairs, instead of being a barrister-at-law of Lincoln's Inn, had been (say) a dog-fancier in Seven Dials, who wishing to ride instead of to walk from Clapham, had driven *himself* home in a cab, under precisely similar circumstances—I shrewdly suspect that the police report that described the occurrence would not have been headed, like this paper, *Wanted, a Driver*, but, *Stealing a Horse and Cab*.





CAPTAIN STEEL'S DILEMMA.

A STORY OF THE BRITISH VOLUNTEER FORCE.

THERE are none of us (the present reader of course excepted), however charming and irresistible, without our faults. Fauntleroy, one of the pleasantest men in London, was addicted to forgery. Robespierre, surnamed 'the Incorruptible,' for his steadfastness of purpose, had a weakness for the guillotine. Cæsar, who never turned his back upon a military foe, fled from the sheriff's-officer. Madame Laffarge was young, beautiful, and accomplished, but she had a passion for the administration of arsenic. The benevolent Rousseau, who devoted himself to his fellow-creatures, sent his own children to the Foundling. Henry VIII., a genuine adorer of the fair sex—— But enough of examples. I have quoted sufficient to show to posterity that my hero, Captain Hippolyte Steel, adjutant of the Royal Blankshire Volunteers, was not the first person recorded in history whose otherwise unexceptionable character was marred by a defect. He was good-looking and patriotic, courageous and genteel; he had four hundred a year of his own in land; never smoked tobacco; was a *bonâ fide* member of the Church of England, and the best shot in his regiment—but he was not punctual. There was the rub. He had indeed a conventional respect for time,

just as men of fashion have for women, but his behaviour towards the same was abominable. In drill, it is true, he made his men keep time ; but we all know how easy it is to correct the faults of others. He never kept it himself : I think I may really say *never*.

Of course, there is a great deal of rubbish talked about the value of time. Commercial gentlemen, who pull out their watches, and mutter 'Tut, tut,' when the omnibus stops at the corner, do not impose upon the world so much as they hope to do. We are well aware it is not really a vital matter whether they begin reading the newspaper at their office at ten precisely or at 10.15. The City would not collapse if they were even an hour late, nor (between ourselves) would it be of much consequence even to *them*. They are a set of humbugs as respects the importance of their every moment ; it is one of the engines that they employ to persuade the public of the gigantic character of their operations. As though one day was not just as good as another for making money ! It is curious that even the rank and file of the commercial army affect this exaggeration of the value of their time. 'Give me twenty-four hours to turn about me,' says some poor wretch surrounded by creditors, 'and you shall all be paid.' What is the good of his turning round in twenty-four hours, like the globe itself ? 'Time is money,' runs their foolish proverb ; whereupon, it was once wittily observed : 'Then, if you give me time, it is the same thing as if I give you money.' Which is quite a new way to pay old debts.

Lawyers also make a great deal of fuss about the value of their time, but with better reason ; for they charge folks not for what they do for them, so much as for the time they take in doing it ; which is one reason, among many, why lawsuits are so prolonged. It is to the credit of the other professions that they do not boast themselves in this particular ; for although the clergy are emphatic about the value of time, it is not upon mere time's account, but on the relation which it bears to eternity. They may make vital questions out of many foolish things, but I never heard of their attaching

supreme importance to their sermons beginning exactly as the clock strikes twelve ; while, as to ending them at any particular time, I have generally noticed their congregations to be more solicitous about that than themselves. We find, indeed, it is the man who does the most work who has always the most time to give to others, and the idlest dog who has always 'no time to spare : ' he fritters away the hours he ought to employ in labour, and then complains how closely he has been kept to his desk. It is so much easier to tell how long you have been working than to explain what you have done.

I have written this much to show that I am not myself a blind devotee of Time, and therefore apt to judge Captain Hippolyte Steel with harshness. I have no personal feeling in the matter whatever : I have never waited dinner for him, nor any other man, one minute. People who do so at the risk of their whitebait being spoiled, pay a very poor compliment both to their own palates and to those guests who have arrived at the proper time. But all persons have not the courage to be just, and Hippolyte's prospects were blighted by a circumstance which, at first sight, seemed to reflect credit upon him. The Newmans of Eaton Place once waited twenty-five minutes for him, and got their turbot spoiled. This, of itself, only showed that the Newmans, being *parvenus*, were ready to abase themselves before the heir-presumptive of a baronetcy ; but old Bullion, the banker, unhappily for Hippolyte, was also of the party, and not at all inclined to abase himself. I heard what he muttered over that fish in rags, but I do not venture to repeat it. When the poor unconscious captain, drawing his chair towards him in a friendly manner at dessert, enquired : 'And how is Miss Margaret, Sir, to-day ? ' he replied : 'And what the devil is that to you, Sir ? ' Margaret Bullion being the banker's only daughter and heiress, who had been hitherto understood to be the *fiancée* of the gallant adjutant of volunteers. Never was unpunctuality so punished.

'Am I to be kept waiting, and get my turbot spoiled,

because this son of a baronet chooses to dawdle?' was all that the remonstrances of Margaret and her Bridesmaids (elect) could for weeks elicit from the old gentleman.

At last, when she insisted with tears: 'But he will *never, never* be late again, papa,' he was so far mollified as to permit the courtship to be renewed upon that basis.

'I am a plain business-man, Sir,' remarked he to the captain, 'and have always met my engagements to the day. It is as easy to be in time as to be after it; and if you cannot conquer a bad habit, you are not the sort of person I wish to see married to my daughter. You understand, therefore, that if you aspire to be her husband, you will not be late again for any important matter such as dinner, and least of all when I am one of the company.'

Captain Steel was proud, but he also doted upon Margaret, and he swallowed his resentment, and submitted. He only lived for her and the volunteer force. There was, of course, no pecuniary necessity for his undertaking the duties of an adjutant; but he liked the work, and did it well. He was always too late, of course; but when he once begun, he made up for lost time. His men adored him, and he would put himself to any inconvenience—short of being in time—to serve them. He had a rifle-butt erected in his own grounds, so that those to whom it was nearer than where the regimental target stood, might come and practise there. There was a shot-proof house for the marker upon one side of it, and all complete.

The time for Hippolyte's marriage was drawing very near, and it was not his intention to be late for *that*, I promise you. Indeed, since that edict of his future father-in-law, he had much improved in respect to punctuality, as I can certify, who happened to be staying with him during those last bachelor days. However late at night we played billiards, Hippolyte was always 'to the fore' at breakfast-time: and the cook was quite astonished to find master always at home when the second bell rang.

Upon a certain day, we were engaged to dine with the Bullions at their country-seat in the neighbourhood. I could hardly prevent Hippolyte from driving over there immediately after lunch, so far as to be positively sure to be in time; but I represented to him that would only look as if he had no confidence in himself. He would seem like an habitual drunkard, who dares not be merely moderate, but is obliged to take the pledge. If we started at six, we should still have a full quarter of an hour to spare. At four o'clock, Hippolyte had put on his evening clothes, in which he looked remarkably well; but still, as I observed, it was a premature proceeding. 'Never mind,' said he; 'I feel safe in these. I sha'n't have to dress, in case anything should happen to delay us.'

It was quite touching to see his anxiety and desire to amend. 'When I have once got her,' said he (referring to his beloved object), 'I'll snap my fingers at old Bullion, and make a point of never being in time for anything.'

At half-past four, who should ride up on that speedy 'weed' of his but Mr. Nolan O'Shaughnessy, of the Royal Blankshire Volunteers, one of those Irish gentlemen to be found in every corps, about whom nobody knows anything, except that there they are? He was sorry to intrude; but he had been accidentally shut out of the regimental competition last week, and was exceedingly anxious to get into Class 2. It was competent for the adjutant to admit him, if he should succeed in satisfying him of his efficiency, which half an hour's practice at the target would suffice to do.

'I doubt that, my good fellow,' said Hippolyte, 'for your shooting used to be rather wild; but I can just spare you half an hour.'

So we went out to the butt, O'Shaughnessy leading his thoroughbred, and tethering that attenuated animal to a neighbouring gate. He had characteristically omitted to bring his ammunition with him, which the adjutant had to supply.

When Steel and I had shut ourselves up in the marker's

box, which was quite an arbour-like little edifice of turf, with its one aperture close to the target, I remarked to my companion, that our friend from the Emerald Isle had rather an undisciplined appearance.

'He's as mad as a March hare,' said he, 'and knows about as much about shooting. He will never get into the Second Class as long as he lives; only one does not like to seem ill-natured. We shall never have to use the green flag, for he never made a bull's-eye in the course of his existence, and I very much doubt if he will ever make "an outer——"'

'What's that?' cried I, as a dull thud on one side of our turf-hut followed the discharge of his first shot.

'Oh, he's hit our butt instead of the target, that's all,' returned Hippolyte coolly. 'It's quite shot-proof; never fear.'

'But he must be a lunatic,' remonstrated I. 'Why do you let him shoot at all?'

'I can't stop him.—By Jove! how quick he fires; but it will be all the sooner over.—Stop a bit; you mustn't distract an adjutant's attention.—I don't know whether that was a hit or not; I must go out and see.—I suppose he knows that the red flag means Stop Firing.' Hippolyte put out the signal in question, waved it in the usual manner, and then stepped out himself. An instant afterwards there was a sharp crack, and then a bullet whizzed within half an inch of his left ear.

'Goodness gracious,' cried Hippolyte, hastily re-entering his ark of safety; 'that blackguard nearly shot me. It shows he had no *malice prepense*, or else he would not have been so near. But the idea of his disregarding the red flag! Confound his ignorance, I'll have him drummed out of the corps.'

All this time, quite a storm of bullets was hurtling about our ears. If rapid firing, altogether independent of aim, could have insured Mr. O'Shaughnessy's promotion, he would already have been in the second class. Not a single bullet, however, hit the target.

At this moment, a terrible incident occurred: out of the thymy moss-clad seat on which we sat, there flew an

enormous insect with an appalling boom, and began to circle around us. I am not well acquainted with the entomology of the country, and I concluded it to be only a bumble-bee. But I noticed Hippolyte turn pale, and wave the red flag with frantic excitement. At this moment, another bumble-bee flew out, and joined the mazy circles of its predecessors.

‘What a noise these bumble-bees make,’ said I, ‘in this confined space; and I don’t think I ever saw such big ones.’

‘Hush!’ said Hippolyte. ‘Do not enrage them; they are hornets. I have no doubt that we are sitting upon a nest of them!’

Imagine our position, in a diminutive sentry-box, five feet high by four feet wide, tenanted by hornets, and the only means of egress exposed to the murderous fire of a madman.

‘If this reptile stings my nose, it will be double its size in half a minute,’ said Hippolyte, with the calmness of despair.

I knew the poor fellow was thinking of how he could present himself in such a condition to his beloved object. A lady’s lip is none the worse, as the poet tells us, if it does look as though ‘a bee had stung it newly;’ but the case is widely different in respect to a gentleman’s nose and a hornet.

Still, the gallant captain did not lose his presence of mind. ‘If you can find the little hole from which these infernal villains escaped,’ said he, ‘stop it quietly up with your finger, or anything.’

‘Not with my finger, if I know it,’ returned I, endeavouring to pacify the hornet that was devoting itself to me by blowing gently at it; ‘but I will try the handle of my penknife.’

This brilliant idea was executed with the most complete success. There was a noise as of about twelve church organs in the seat beneath us, but it was muffled. The penknife exactly fitted. Agitated, I have no doubt, by the stifled voices of their relatives, the two outside hornets whizzed about us like catherine-wheels. We

dared not move a muscle, except that Hippolyte kept on waving the red flag, which only seemed to have the same effect upon O'Shaughnessy as on some savage bull—namely to excite him to frenzy. He appeared to fire about twenty shots a minute, and all wide ones.

'How many cartridges has the villain got?' enquired I.

'Enough for a twelvemonth,' groaned the adjutant. 'They have put the regimental chest under the walnut-tree.—What time is it? If this unutterable idiot *does* get me late for dinner, I'll wring his neck.'

With the utmost caution, and with an apologetic glance at my hornet, I drew forth my watch. 'We have no time to lose,' said I. 'We have already been here half an hour, and indeed it seems half a day.'

'I'll chance it,' cried Hippolyte, setting his teeth, and gathering himself together for a rush.

'You will be a dead man,' said I, 'if you do. Think of your Margaret, and don't leave a poor fellow alone in this horrid place with a couple of hornets. See, that scoundrel has already put three bullets through the red flag. If you had been there, they would have gone through you instead.'

The argument was unanswerable; Hippolyte gnashed his teeth in impotent rage.

'I am sure,' said I soothingly, 'when old Bullion comes to understand the very peculiar circumstances of our position, he will perceive that punctuality was out of the question. This unmitigated scoundrel, O'Shaughnessy—'

'Arrah, captain jewel, and aint I in class 2 by this time?' ejaculated a querulous voice, and at the aperture of our prison-house appeared the hateful features of our jailer, distorted by an adulatory grin.

To throw the red flag in his face, to leap out of the marker's butt, and fly towards the gate at which the speedy 'weed' was tethered, was but the work of a moment; and the next, Captain Steel was flying across the country in full evening dress, in the direction of his dinner.

As for me, before O'Shaughnessy could recover from his amazement, I had jerked the penknife out of the hole, and was running homeward at full speed, leaving that gallant volunteer surrounded by such a host of infuriated hornets that they seemed to darken the air.

So Captain and Adjutant Hippolyte Steel got in time for dinner and for Margaret, after all.





BLANK'S BIRTHPLACE.

WHEN all that is mortal of me has departed, and only my name and fame are left here below, I do trust that I shall never become the property of a committee. I hope that no company will set themselves to 'work' my memory as they have worked Blank's; I do indeed. It makes me sad to think what his noble spirit must suffer, if it be cognizant of the tribute it receives. A modest shade, like his, must blush to see his native village advertised, throughout the summer months, as the Birthplace of the Immortal Blank. None who can read a hand-bill, and who travel by railway, can possibly be left in doubt that Asterisk *was* his birthplace, 'the home of his boyhood, the occasional residence of his maturer years, and the spot where at last, full of years and honours, he came to pass the evening of life, and eventually to lay his venerable bones.' I quote from the circular issued by the committee, and adopted by the railway company in their advertisements. Every year, excursion-trains are run to his last resting-place 'on and after May 1;' positively the last trip to Asterisk ('dear to every English heart, as being the dwelling-place of Blank') occurs at the end of each October. A reduction of fares (very extensively advertised in the locality) takes place upon every return of his natal-day.

Sooner or later, an advertisement, provided only it be

inserted often enough, is sure to catch you. It is no more to be evaded than death or taxes. One comes to drink Epps's Cocoa before one dies. And thus it was that Brown, Jones, and Robinson came to go to Asterisk last summer in spite of themselves. The two former resent exceedingly publicity, popularity, and everything else which is applauded by the penny papers, but they succumbed to the inevitable. I, who am Robinson, merely went because Brown and Jones went.

Upon the railway ticket was printed in small type after the word Asterisk, Blank's Birthplace; and, indeed, had it not been his birthplace, Asterisk would not have been a railway station at all. A small branch leaves the main line for the sole and express purpose of doing honour to Blank's memory. The other places at which it stops are savage and remote localities. One of them, I remember, was actually called Wooten-wawen, a name suggestive of the Cannibal Islands. The engine was named 'Blank;' the tender was appropriately christened after one of the love-poems of that world-renowned author. When we arrived at our journey's end, the railway policeman, as he took our tickets at the gate, politely jerked his head in the direction of Blank's supposed residence; 'Fust turnin' on the left, and second to the right, gents; and there's the 'ouse.' I say 'supposed' residence, because it is by no means positively certain that he was ever inside it. Nothing *is* certain about Blank. That truly great and divinely gifted man seems to have been dowered with prescience: to have had a suspicion of what would be done with him after death, and to have purposely destroyed all evidences of his personal identity. There are numberless established theories about Blank, and new ones cropping up every day; and I should not be surprised if somebody should presently set himself to prove that Blank had never been within fifty miles of Asterisk in his life. Then the committee would of course bring their action, and we should have a chance of getting at something definite by cross-examination. Wise beyond the wisest of all time, Blank never committed himself to paper; that is, notwithstanding he

was so voluminous a writer, he left no scrap of his own handwriting behind him, except the signature to certain law documents. He was a practical man ; and while taking care that all legal requirements should be satisfied, he made no provision for sentiment whatever. If he ever cut his name on a tree, he cut the tree down afterwards. If he ever sowed it in mustard and cress, he took care to eat the salad. The more I consider this matter, the more I am convinced that Blank had a presentiment of the committee and the branch-line. He actually caused these lines to be written over his grave :

“Blest be y^e man y^t spares these stones,
And curst be he y^t moves my bones.”

Otherwise, we should have had his bones up long ago, and arranged them nicely in a glass case. All the great men that have ever lived since his time (with the exception of George IV.) have come to Asterisk, and written their names wherever they could find room upon the walls of his birth-chamber. His cradle, it is true, is not preserved, but ‘all reason and analogy unite to show’ that this must have been the exact spot where he first saw the light. *The house belonged to his own father*, a statement italicised because attested ; and this was the apartment most probably used for such domestic occurrences. Therefore, when Jones enquired confidentially of the very respectable lady-custodian whether ‘there really was any direct evidence’ of Blank’s having been brought into the world in that particular room, he not only hurt her feelings but flew in the face of the facts. It is due to Brown and myself to say that we at once apologised for this needless and inexcusable barbarity upon the part of our companion, who (we explained) makes money by mathematics. I would not have had her know that he was also a clergyman for twice the value of the admission fee ; for such a confession must have either shaken her faith in the Establishment or in Blank himself. She on her part was sufficiently generous not to make public what had occurred, for otherwise Jones might have been torn to pieces at Asterisk, and sent to Wooten-wawen to be devoured.

If there was nothing in the sacred tenement which had been absolutely Blank's, yet there was much indirectly associated with him ; all the editions of his works, for instance, and almost all the fancy portraits of him. I say fancy portraits advisedly. Blank was the incarnation of fancy, and a very many-featured man. If not, we must come to the conclusion that his sagacious prescience determined to baffle the committee not only in the matter of manuscripts, but also in that of pictures, for there is quite a gallery of them extant and none of them alike. There is also a bust upon his tomb quite different from the pictures. The famous theory of 'undesigned coincidence' is reversed in this case ; and I leave it to the German critics (who have lost themselves again and again in the Blank maze) whether some system of 'designed nonconformity' may not be instituted to explain everything yet. This (I must say) ingenious suggestion has certainly never occurred to the inhabitants of Asterisk itself. They imagine that the more immediately they can identify themselves with their tutelary genius the better. Half of them are Blanks by name. All of them make capital out of Blank. There is the *Blank Arms* open to receive you, and the Blank Distillery to supply it with spirits in which to drink his immortal memory. I regret to add that over a very small establishment in a by-street is an inscription setting forth that superior Blank lemonade is to be procured within at three-halfpence a bottle. It is perfectly sure—whatever else may be obscure about him—that Blank detested lemonade and all such 'wish-wash,' and has therefore no sort of connection with this establishment. I noticed also 'Blank Dips' very prominently advertised ; whereas we have evidence to prove that Blank patronised the oil called 'midnight oil,' and not dips.

At the inn already alluded to, there is religiously preserved a parlour, a chair, and even a poker, once made use of, not indeed actually by Blank, but by a gentleman of literary reputation who came to worship at his shrine during the present century. Jones, always sceptical (except of course with respect to professional matters), in-

dulged in fits of mirth over these sacred relics. The words 'Wiggle's Poker' inscribed upon that article affected him to tears of laughter. For my part, I never saw so disgraceful an exhibition; but Brown rather encouraged him than otherwise; and when the imperturbable waiting-maid brought in a cold Blank pie, I thought they would both have choked over it. It was market-day, and the windows were open, and I was really alarmed lest we should become objects of popular vengeance. It would be in vain, I knew, to attempt to convince the good people that Brown and Jones revered Blank at heart most cordially, and indeed resented the local absurdities committed in his name upon that very account; with the Asteriskites, the exact contrary was the case; they had probably never read a line of his works; but they believed in the poker business implicitly. We should certainly be put to death, if our lives depended upon our explanation of the matter being understood by them; and I besought my friends to moderate their transports, until at least we had got on to the main line of railway. But they only made dumb motions towards the pie and the poker, and gasped and gurgled in reply. This was not a frame of mind in which to seek out the other associations of the place; and I took them to the church at once, in hopes to sober them. 'There, at least,' thought I, 'Jones is sure to conduct himself with propriety, and even Brown will probably abstain from ribaldry.' But by this time there had grown up in both my companions an unreasonable but most virulent antipathy to everything relating to the local lion. They murmured against me; protested that they would not stand anything more (as though they had treated me to luncheon, which they had not); and expressed a vehement desire to leave 'the blessed place' [I use Brown's words], 'and have done with it,' although there was so much more yet to be seen. In the churchyard—to give you an idea of Brown's state of mind—I stopped a moment, and observed (I think impressively): 'Well, it at least is certain that Blank must have looked with his own eyes at this very edifice at which we ourselves are now gazing!'

'And who the deuce cares whether he did or not?' was the brutal reply.

Even Jones was shocked at this, and called Brown to order for using in such a locality the word 'deuce;' upon the meaning and derivation of which so sharp a controversy ensued between them, that Brown walked straight back again to the inn, declaring that he had left his umbrella there, which was of more value to him than any Blankean association whatever, and, moreover, genuine. The last word, in particular, he pronounced with a most fiendish emphasis, accompanied with an unseemly wink; and so we parted, Jones and I to church, Brown to the alehouse—a type, perhaps (if I did but possess Blank's genius to convey it), of our respective lives.

After the church, there was Blank's other house to be explored, which is Asterisk's rival attraction to the birthplace. The latter, as has been shown, is in good preservation, and has everything fitting about it, except direct evidence of Blank's having been born there; the other mansion was most undoubtedly once his residence, but unfortunately nothing of the original tenement remains. Do I say nothing? Let me not do Asterisk and the committee wrong. There are half-a-dozen large stones placed under cucumber-frames—and, indeed, I really thought they *were* cucumbers—which are said to be the ORIGINAL FOUNDATIONS.

While Jones and I were regarding these interesting relics, and especially their glass cases, with unfeigned admiration, and expressing our pity for poor Brown, whose unhappy temper had caused him to miss them, a polite individual came from the house and invited us to walk in. It had not been exactly Blank's residence, he admitted, but it had been always allowed to stand upon a portion of the very spot where that edifice had stood: even looked upon in that light, the house had naturally possessed a surpassing interest for all to whom the name of Blank was dear; but something had been discovered of late—within a few days, in fact, of our present visit—which, it was not too much to say, would delight the civilised world.

We were fortunate in being among the first five hundred persons who had been privileged to witness it. It had been brought to light by the merest accident — one of those trifles upon which so often hang affairs of the gravest moment: but there it was.

‘But what *is* it, my good Sir?’ enquired Jones.

‘You must see the house first,’ returned the polite individual, ‘you will find *that* not without an interest of its own; and last and best of all, you shall be made acquainted with THE GREAT DISCOVERY.’

With palpitating hearts, we accordingly followed our conductor. My own impression was that Blank’s private study had been discovered—his chosen place for composition—in the most satisfactory state of preservation, and containing his favourite desk, perhaps with an unfinished manuscript in it. Jones pictured to himself some equally attractive spectacle. In the meantime, we traversed room after room, which, if they had ‘an interest of their own,’ had certainly none for us, and ascended stair after stair until we reached an attic chamber.

‘Be prepared,’ said the polite individual in a solemn voice. ‘It was here that the secret was discovered.’

There was nothing in the room whatever; but at the further end of it was a wooden partition, with apparently a couple of cupboards in it.

With a stately motion of the hand, we were waved towards these recesses. ‘They have been made,’ explained our conductor, ‘expressly for the accommodation of the public, in order that more than one person might be gratified at the same time.’

With trembling hands, Jones and myself each opened a cupboard, and reverently looked within. If we had been less respectful, we should have run our heads against a brick-wall that was within a foot or so of the apertures.

‘I can see nothing,’ complained Jones; and indeed it was almost pitch dark.

‘Do you not see a wall before you?’ enquired our conductor, with the air of a man who has a great treat in store.

‘Yes, I see *a wall*,’ said Jones discontentedly.

'You are now beholding the veritable original GABLE END of Blank's own house,' said the polite individual. 'It was discovered only a few days back, when we were making some alterations in the premises.'

Although it was dark in the cupboard, Jones and I could see one another inside it by means of the light behind us, and unbeheld by our conductor, we now exchanged glances of indescribable meaning. My friend was purple, and his shoulders were convulsed with a perfect paroxysm of mirth. I knew that if he moved, he must needs burst into roar after roar of inextinguishable laughter, which would be very embarrassing to the polite individual whose invited guests we were. There was nothing for it, therefore, but for us both to remain in our ridiculous positions. No doubt attributing our delay to satisfaction at the spectacle afforded to us, our host proceeded: 'In consequence of this remarkable and unprecedented discovery of the gable end, a national subscription is about to be set on foot to secure it in perpetuity for the British public. A shilling apiece is accordingly demanded ——'

'What!' exclaimed Jones, withdrawing from the aperture a countenance suddenly sobered by the threat of pecuniary exaction. 'You don't mean to say you are going to charge for looking at a dead wall?'

'The original gable end of the house of the immortal Blank, Sir,' returned the polite individual with dignity, 'can scarcely be considered to be a dead wall.'

We paid our shillings, and departed from this interesting edifice without further remonstrance.

'It is this sort of thing,' observed I philosophically,

'Which makes it seem more sweet to be
The little life of bank and brier,
The bird that pipes his lone desire,
And dies unheard within his tree,

'Than he that warbles long and loud,
And drops at Glory's temple-gates,
For whom the carrion vulture waits,
To tear his heart before the crowd.'

‘Just so,’ returned Jones. ‘It is a satisfaction to reflect, that when you and I are gone, Robinson, *our* gable ends will not be similarly exhibited. However, here is the railway station, and Brown with his recovered umbrella. We must take care to impress him with the idea that we have been enchanted with what he has missed.’

But we found Brown not at all impressionable upon this point; and when we pressed him at least to promise some pecuniary help towards the national subscription for purchasing Blank's original gable end, he gave impassioned utterance to the following reply: ‘No, I'll not do that; but I tell you *what* I'll do: I am ready to give a good round sum towards bursting up the whole concern.’ By which we understood him to mean not only the gable end, but Asterisk and the committee, the branch-line, the chair and poker, and all the rest of the exhibition.

THE END.

NOW READY.
A CHEAPER EDITION OF
ANTHONY TROLLOPE'S WORKS
ON
AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND.

In TWO Volumes, cr. 8vo, cloth, price 7s. 6d.

Mr. ANTHONY TROLLOPE'S highly entertaining and useful work on the Rise, Progress, Resources, and Government of the Colonies, are also issued in four volumes, each complete in itself, at 2s. per Volume.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA & WEST AUSTRALIA.
NEW SOUTH WALES & QUEENSLAND.
VICTORIA AND TASMANIA.
NEW ZEALAND.

From the TIMES of April 12.

"Mr. Trollope has written the best account of the Australian colonies yet published. No other equals it in literary power and skill; no other is such pleasant and easy reading, or so full of the very information which English readers need, or so fair and true, and free from crudeness in its opinions and speculations. . . . We would make more extracts, but we fear to be accused of what is called in Australia 'picking the eyes out of the land,' a practice for which the free selectors are much reviled by the squatters. The chapters on Australian society are just and excellent; and though it might be possible for us to disagree from Mr. Trollope in one or two small matters of fact or points of political speculation, the difference would be really so trifling that we prefer to find no fault at all, but to repeat—and the writer is able to speak from long experience of the Australian colonies, and from perusal of many books which have been written on them—that these volumes supersede a whole mass of dull and indifferent literature, and in spite of their repetitions, are the most agreeable just, and acute works extant upon their subject."

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL.

ORIGINAL EDITIONS OF POPULAR NOVELS.

8vo, Cloth, price Six Shillings each.

PHINEAS REDUX. By ANTHONY TROLLOPE. 24 Illustrations.

HANDY ANDY. By SAMUEL LOVER. 24 Illustrations.

HE WOULD BE A GENTLEMAN.

By SAMUEL LOVER. 28 Illustrations.

RALPH THE HEIR.

By ANTHONY TROLLOPE. 17 Illustrations by F. A. Fraser.

PHINEAS FINN.

By ANTHONY TROLLOPE. 20 Illustrations by Millais.

CON CREGAN.

By CHARLES LEVER. 18 Illustrations.

JACK HINTON.

By CHARLES LEVER. 26 Illustrations.

HARRY LORREQUER.

By CHARLES LEVER. 22 Illustrations.

THE O'DONOGHUE.

By CHARLES LEVER. 26 Illustrations.

BARRINGTON.

By CHARLES LEVER. 26 Illustrations.

LUTTRELL OF ARRAN.

By CHARLES LEVER. 32 Illustrations.

ONE OF THEM.

By CHARLES LEVER. 30 Illustrations.

CHARLES O'MALLEY.

By CHARLES LEVER. 44 Illustrations.

THE DALTONS.

By CHARLES LEVER. 48 Illustrations.

KNIGHT OF GWYNNE.

By CHARLES LEVER. 40 Illustrations.

THE DODD FAMILY ABROAD.

By CHARLES LEVER. 40 Illustrations.

TOM BURKE OF "OURS."

By CHARLES LEVER. 44 Illustrations.

DAVENPORT DUNN.

By CHARLES LEVER. 44 Illustrations.

ROLAND CASHEL.

By CHARLES LEVER. 40 Illustrations.

MARTINS OF CRO' MARTIN.

By CHARLES LEVER. 40 Illustrations.

BRAMLEIGHS OF BISHOP'S FOLLY.

By CHARLES LEVER. 18 Illustrations.

LORD KILGOBBIN.

By CHARLES LEVER. 18 Illustrations.

SYLVESTER SOUND.

By Author of "Valentine Vox." 30 Illustrations.

LONDON: CHAPMAN & HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

The Select Library of Fiction

The best, cheapest, and most **POPULAR WORKS** published, well printed in clear readable type, on good paper, and strongly bound.
Containing the writings of the most popular Authors of the day.

Of the many cheap editions and reprints of works of fiction, there is none which better deserve the extensive support which they receive at the hands of the public than the series in course of issue under the title of the "Select Library of Fiction." The number of volumes already published in this form is about one hundred, and they include the whole of the works by Charles Lever, four by the Author of "John Halifax;" and also by—

Anthony Trollope
Henry Kingsley
W. H. Ainsworth
Mrs. Trollope
Victor Hugo
Captain Armstrong
Lady E. Ponsonby
Charles Lever
Samuel Lover
Mrs. Grey
Miss Anna H. Drury
Mrs. M. Caldwell
"Scrutator"

Mrs. Oliphant
Whyte Melville
O. W. Holmes
Miss Pardoe
Author of "John
Halifax"
Thomas A. Trollope
F. W. Robinson
Charles Clarke
Theodore Hook
Author of "Guy
Livingstone"
Author of "Charley
Nugent"

Author of "Caste"
J. S. Le Fanu
Holme Lee
Annie Thomas
Lady Eden
James Payn
Jane Austen
James Grant
Edmund Yates
Mrs. Edwards
Mrs. Forrester
Miss Betham Ed-
wards
Amelia B. Edwards

And many others well known to readers of works of fiction. In addition to the literary merits which the works possess in themselves, they present to the reader the important advantage of being printed in clear and excellent type on good paper, differing in this respect very materially from some of the cheaper reprints, which fall to pieces in the process of reading, and which so sorely try the eyesight, especially of those who are accustomed to read in railway carriages.—*The Observer*.

Price 1s., 2s., and 2s. 6d.

London: CHAPMAN & HALL, 193 Piccadilly.

AGENTS:

London: ROUTLEDGE & SONS; WARD, LOCK, & TYLER;
WARNE & CO.; W. H. SMITH & SON.

Edinburgh: JOHN MENZIES. Glasgow: MURRAY & SON.

Dublin: W. H. SMITH & SON.

New York: ROUTLEDGE & SONS. Toronto: CAMPBELL & SON.

Melbourne: GEORGE ROBERTSON.

SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION.

NEW 2/- VOLUMES.

Squire Arden.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "Chronicles of Carlingford," "Salem Chapel," &c.

"Mrs. Oliphant's new book will not diminish her already established reputation. The plot is interesting and well managed, the scene well laid, and the characters various and forcibly described."—*Athenæum*.

"A most interesting novel. The special qualifications of the writer have seldom been better illustrated."—*Post*.

Wild Georgie.

By Jean Middlemass.

Author of "Lil."

"Wild Georgie" will add considerably to the author's reputation. The charm of the novel is the deep interest of the plot, which never flags for a moment. The characters are drawn with life-like vigour."—*Court Journal*.

In the Days of My Youth.

By Amelia B. Edwards,

Author of "Barbara's History," &c.

"A novel which cannot fail to charm; being written in a bright, sparkling, happy manner."—*Morning Post*.

The Lost Bride.

By Lady Chatterton.

"An ingenious and picturesque story, in which there is a good deal of character-drawing and some pleasant and lively sketches of society occur."—*Spectator*.

"A Lost Bride" will add considerably to Lady Chatterton's literary reputation. It is replete with interest, and the characters are perfectly true to nature."—*Court Journal*.

For Love and Life.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "Chronicles of Carlingford," &c.

"For Love and Life" is equal in all respects to the reputation of its writer. It will be read with delight."—*John Bull*.

"This novel is well worth reading. The story is interesting, the plot is original, and every character is a study."—*Daily News*.

Debenham's Vow.

By Amelia B. Edwards,

Author of "Barbara's History," "Miss Carew," &c.

"Debenham's Vow" is decidedly a clever book. The story is pure and interesting, and most of the characters are natural, while some are charming."—*Saturday Review*.

"This work is highly creditable to the author. The two best merits of the work are that it is original and that its sympathies are with right things."—*Athenæum*.

Beautiful Edith.

By the Author of "Ursula's Love Story."

"Beautiful Edith" is a pretty love story, well written, and good in tone."—*Athenæum*.

"We have no hesitation in placing 'Beautiful Edith' among the very best novels that have been issued for a long period. It will become widely popular. The author possesses a charming style, and a talent for quiet humour."—*Messenger*.

SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION.

NEW 2/- VOLUMES.

Harry Muir;

A STORY OF SCOTTISH LIFE.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "Chronicles of Carlingford."

"We prefer 'Harry Muir' to most of the Scottish novels that have appeared since Galt's domestic stories. This new tale, by the author of 'Margaret Maitland,' is a real picture of the weakness of man's nature and the depths of woman's kindness. The narrative, to repeat our praise, is not one to be entered on or parted from without our regard for its writer being increased."—*Athenæum*.



Lost for Gold.

By Katherine King,

Author of "The Queen of the Regiment."

"Miss King's second novel is much better written than her first. Sounder judgment and increased grasp of character are to be traced in the style, and there is the same frank naturalness, and the same freedom from conventionality."—*Spectator*.

"Our readers will find much to interest them in this novel. It is the work of a writer of lively imagination and real ability."—*Messenger*.



Colonel Dacre.

By the Author of "Caste," "Pearl,"
"Bruno's Revenge," &c.

"There is much that is attractive both in Colonel Dacre and the simple-hearted girl whom he honours with his love."—*Athenæum*.

"Colonel Dacre is a gentleman throughout, which character is somewhat rare in modern novels."—*Fall Mail Gazette*.

May.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "Chronicles of Carlingford," &c.

"'May' is one of the best novels of the year. The Fifehire scenes are admirable bits of that quiet landscape painting in which Mrs. Oliphant excels."—*Athenæum*.

"'May' is one of the freshest and most charming of Mrs. Oliphant's creations."—*Blackwood's Magazine*.

"Mrs. Oliphant is always original. Her books have a certain stamp of their own. The gem of this novel 'May' is the character of May or Marjory herself. She is a grand creature, and we congratulate Mrs. Oliphant on the beauty and harmony of her character."—*Saturday Review*.



The Queen of the
Regiment.

By Katherine King,

Author of "Lost for Gold."

"A charming, fresh, cheery novel. Its merits are rare and welcome. The gleefulness, the ease, the heartiness of the author's style cannot fail to please. Her heroine is a captivating girl."—*Spectator*.



Ombra.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "Chronicles of Carlingford," "Salem Chapel," &c.

"This story is very carefully constructed. It has been written with sedulous pains, and there is no lack of individuality about any of the characters. The customary grace of the author's style, the high tone of mind, the ready and frank sympathies which have always characterised her, are found in this book, as in its predecessors; but here is something that they, not even the best among them, have not. She has never produced a rival to Kate Courtenay."—*Spectator*.

"This book will delight the reader, and, if possible, increase the gifted writer's well-established reputation."—*Messenger*.

SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION.

NEW 2/- VOLUMES.

Madonna Mary.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "Ombra," "May," &c.

"From first to last 'Madonna Mary' is written with evenness and vigour, and overflows with the best qualities of its writer's fancy and humour. The story is thoroughly original, as far as its plot and leading incidents are concerned; and the strength of the narrative is such that we question if any reader will lay it aside, notwithstanding the fulness in his throat, and the constriction of his heart, until he has shared in the happiness which is liberally assigned to the actors of the drama before the falling of the green curtain. But the principal charms of the work are subtle humour, fineness of touch, and seeming ease with which Mrs. Oliphant delineates and contrasts her numerous characters."—*Athenæum*.

—O—

The Days of My Life.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "Salem Chapel," &c.

"The author writes with her usual fine capacity for the picturesque, and her invariable good sense, good feeling, and good taste. No part of the narrative is uninteresting."—*Athenæum*.

"This story is most eloquently written and is extremely attractive."—*Press*.

—O—

Mr. Arle.

By the Author of "Caste," &c.

"'Mr. Arle' is a work of a very high order, and we are offering it no light tribute when we say that, in style and conception, it reminds us of the writings of Mrs. Gaskell."—*John Bull*.

—O—

Miss Carew.

By Amelia B. Edwards,

Author of "Barbara's History,"

"Debenham's Vow," &c.

"Never has the author's brilliant and vivacious style been more conspicuously displayed than in this very original and charming story."—*Sun*.

3

The Last of the Mortimers.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "May," "Ursula," &c.

"A charming book—simple, quaint, and fresh. It is a novel 'comme il y en a peu,' and it will go far to sustain the reputation of the author of 'Margaret Maitland.'"—*Athenæum*.

"'The Last of the Mortimers' has given us much pleasure. It is not only good in itself, but is quite as clever in its way as 'Mrs. Margaret Maitland,' and has something stronger in the fibre of its romance. It is the most powerful and most interesting novel by this authoress, and the world will thank her for more tales as good and as amusing."—*Globe*.

—O—

John and I.

By Miss Betham Edwards,

Author of "Lisabee's Love Story."

"Originality is always refreshing, and a book that is quite unlike any other book we ever met with, has, at least, one claim upon our attention. 'John and I' is the title of a novel which certainly has the merit of singularity. It is besides well-written, unaffected, and interesting."—*Athenæum*.

—O—

A Book of Heroines.

By the Author of "Margaret and her Bridesmaids," "Three Wives."

"The heroines of these volumes are most of them charming: all of them are women worth reading about."—*Observer*.

—O—

Off the Line.

By Lady Charles Thynne.

"This story is pleasant and natural. There is interest enough in the incidents to keep the reader's attention alive, and the moral is thoroughly healthy."—*Saturday Review*.

"A story with a genuine interest."—*Athenæum*.

SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION.

NEW 2/- VOLUMES.

Queen of Herself,

By Alice King,

Author of "Queen of the Regiment."

"Miss King writes gracefully and with good purpose. Her novels are always interesting, and 'Queen of Herself' is true, vivid, and marked by unusual power."—*Examiner*.

"This story can well be commended to the readers of fiction."—*Morning Post*.

"A story of the very best class. It raises an interest of the most exciting kind."—*Messenger*.

First in the Field.

By the Author of "Recommended to Mercy."

"A novel of considerable ability. . . . The plot is full of strong situations. The characters are distinct, and not unnatural."—*Athenæum*.

"We cordially recommend this work for general perusal. The characters are strongly drawn, the incidents well developed and diversified."—*Messenger*.

"A powerful, original, and profoundly interesting novel."—*Sunday Times*.

Father Godfrey.

By the Author of "Anne Dysart."

"A well-written story. Godfrey's character is finely drawn."—*Athenæum*.

"This story is well and vividly told."—*Daily News*.

"A book of considerable ability and of thrilling interest, which never flags. Each character is portrayed in a vivid manner, and the plot is well carried out."—*John Bull*.

Heart and Cross.

By the Author of "Margaret Maitland."

"A delightful work. The interest is preserved from the opening to the closing page."—*Post*.

Pearl.

By the Author of "Caste," "Mr. Arle," "Col. Dacre," &c., &c.

"This is the best book that the author has written. 'Pearl' is a refined and charming story. The incidents and characters are managed with delicate subtlety, and there is a careful finish about each character which raises the story into a work of art. 'Pearl' is exquisitely drawn. She is worthy of her name."—*Athenæum*.

"This novel is a very interesting one. The characters are well portrayed, and there is an indescribable charm about the heroine."—*Observer*.

Sun and Shade.

By the Author of "Ursula's Love Story."

"An interesting story. It exhibits the merits of refined and easy language, natural delineation of the manners of social life, and insight into the feelings and motives of mankind."—*Globe*.

"Many readers will be glad of such a genuine love story, pure and simple, as 'Sun and Shade.' We have thoroughly enjoyed the book."—*Examiner*.

Three Wives.

By the Author of "Ladies of Lovel-Leigh," "Book of Heroines."

"The popular authoress of 'Margaret and her Bridesmaids' has here given us three very charming volumes. The work is full of interest, and will be read throughout with pleasure. We can safely commend 'Three Wives' to the best attention of novel readers."—*Sun*.

"'Three Wives' is a novel to be read. The volumes have much interest and real pathos."—*Globe*.

The House on the Moor.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "May," "Salem Chapel."

"This story is very interesting, and the interest deepens as the story proceeds."—*Athenæum*.

SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION.

NEW 2/- VOLUMES.

Ursula's Love Story.

By the Author of "Sun and Shade."

"As a picture of contemporary manners, 'Ursula's Love Story' has more than ordinary merit. Its tale is fresh, interesting, and well told; its language is simple and correct, and its characterisation is not wanting in power. Evidences of culture are frequent in its passages, over which hangs a pleasant aroma of refinement and good taste. Ursula is an attractive heroine, admirably depicted; Edgar Ravenel, Mrs. Daynham, and all the characters, even to the most subordinate, are life-like. Their actions and gossip, loves, betrothals and marriages are well described, and constitute with the main interest a very pleasant novel."—*Athenæum*.

—o—

Bruna's Revenge.

By the Author of "Caste," "My Son's Wife," etc.

"Viewed simply as love stories, fresh, pure, and pathetic, these volumes deserve praise."—*Athenæum*.

"'Bruna's Revenge' is all fire, animation, life, and reality. The whole story fascinates the reader's attention."—*Standard*.

—o—

Checkmate.

By J. Sheridan Le Fanu,

Author of "Uncle Silas," &c.

"A very well written novel. The plot is constructed with wonderful ingenuity."—*Examiner*.

"From the first page to the dénouement the author excites, sustains, and baffles our curiosity."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

—o—

From Olympus to Hades

By Mrs. Forrester,

Author of "Fair Women,"
"Dolores."

"A novel of no ordinary ability. Its moral is excellent, and the plot is arranged with consummate skill. The characters are very well drawn."—*John Bull*.

5

Magdalen Hepburn :

A STORY OF THE SCOTTISH
REFORMATION.

By Mrs. Oliphant,

Author of "May," "Harry Muir."

"A well prepared and carefully executed picture of the society and state of manners in Scotland at the dawn of the Reformation."—*Athenæum*.

"'Magdalen Hepburn' will sustain the reputation which the author of 'Margaret Maitland' has acquired. It is a well prepared and carefully executed picture of the society and state of manners in Scotland at the dawn of the Reformation. John Knox is faithfully drawn."—*Athenæum*.

—o—

Clara Levesque.

By William Gilbert,

Author of "Shirley Hall Asylum,"
"Martha," &c.

"A work of real power and originality."—*Standard*.

"Mr. Gilbert has once more achieved a great success in placing before the public such a cleverly written and skilfully constructed book."—*John Bull*.

—o—

The Queen of the County.

By the Author of "Margaret and
her Bridesmaids," "Three Wives,"
&c., &c.

"A novel of the first class. It is a story of exciting interest."—*Post*.

—o—

The Ladies of Lovel- Leigh.

By the Author of "Lords and
Ladies," "Margaret and her
Bridesmaids," &c.

"The author of this interesting tale has not now for the first time proved to the world her extraordinary power in delineating the affections. The lesson is one of impressive force."—*Daily News*.

"A very pleasant novel."—*Press*.

SELECT LIBRARY OF FICTION.

NEW 2/- VOLUMES.

Leyton Hall,

AND OTHER TALES.

By *Mark Lemon*,

Author of "Falkner Lyle," &c.

"These volumes are full of interest, humour, and pathos. They are sure to be popular."—*Star*.

"We commend 'Leyton Hall' most heartily. The story is an extremely good one, and the shorter tales are all of a very effective character."—*Illustrated News*.

—o—

Lords and Ladies.

By the Author of "Margaret and her Bridesmaids," "Three Wives."

"'Lords and Ladies' is one of the most charming books with which the literature of fiction has been enriched this season. The truth and value of the moral of the story will recommend it as highly as the vivacity and humour of its style and the ingenuity of its construction."—*Post*.

—o—

Lisabee's Love Story.

By *Miss Betham Edwards*,

Author of "John and I."

"This book is a very good one. There is real beauty in the title of 'Lisabee's Love Story,' a tale so simple and idyllic in its nature that the Laureate himself might have uttered it in verse as companion to the 'Dora' and 'Gardener's Daughter,' the 'Enoch Arden' and 'The Aylmer's Field.'"—*Examiner*.

—o—

Fair Women.

By *Mrs. Forrester*,

Author of "Olympus to Hades."

"The plot of this story is fairly constructed and worked out. The style is natural and unaffected."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"A healthy and interesting story. Mrs. Forrester's skill in the delineation of character is most forcibly shown. Winifred Erre and Fée Alton are charming creations."—*Sunday Gazette*.

6

Monsieur Maurice,

AND OTHER TALES.

By *Amelia B. Edwards*,

Author of "Barbara's History," "Debenham's Vow," &c., &c.

"Miss Edwards is one of our best writers of novelettes. The tales in these volumes are as good as those in 'Miss Carow,' which is high praise."—*Athenæum*.

"These sparkling, clever stories are bright, healthy, and amusing to the last—abounding with touches of pathos and lively incident."—*Standard*.

—o—

Willing to Die.

By *J. Sheridan Le Fanu*,

Author of "Uncle Silas," &c.

"A remarkable, vigorous, and original novel, written with great power. The characters are drawn with singular brightness and clearness of touch, and the plot is admirably contrived."—*Standard*.

"There is not a dull page in this book. Sir Harry Rokestone is an inimitable portrait. A keener appreciation of character has seldom been manifested."—*John Bull*.

—o—

Paul Wynter's Sacrifice.

By *Mrs. Duffus Hardy*.

"An exceptionally good novel—a story nobly planned, finely finished, and richly charged with poetry and humour. It is one of those prose poems which seldom appear without making a distinct mark in literary annals, and acquiring permanent popularity."—*Athenæum*.

"This interesting and able work is its author's master-piece. It is a well-written, agreeable and entertaining novel, powerful in its analysis of character, and full of clear and effective dialogue and description."—*Sunday Times*.

THE SELECT LIBRARY 2/- VOLUMES.

The Kellys and the O'Kellys.

By Anthony Trollope,

Author of "Rachel Ray."

"Mr. Trollope is one of the most fertile writers of the day; and when his 'Kellys and O'Kellys' made their first appearance, they immediately commanded much popularity, chiefly from the racy, and not overdrawn, descriptions of Irish character which they exhibited; and we read even now, with a feeling of freshness, of Morrison's Hotel, Barry Lynch and Anty Lynch, Mr. Daly, the Attorney, Fanny Wyndham, Martin Kelly's Courtship, Lord Kilcullen, and others—all characters in their way."

—○—

A Rent in a Cloud and St. Patrick's Eve;

OR, THREE ERAS IN THE LIFE OF AN IRISH PEASANT.

By Charles Lever,

Author of "Harry Lorrequer," "Charles O'Malley," &c.

"Full of beauty and truth, and will probably be even more popular than anything that Mr. Lever has yet given to the world."—*Tait's Magazine.*

"One of the best and purest productions of this fertile author. The tale is touched throughout with genuine pathos, and exhibits glimpses of beauty, moral and intellectual, gleaming over the rugged lot of the Irish labourer, like the pure specks of blue in a stormy sky, when occasionally the clouds sever."—*Britannia.*

—○—

Emilia Wyndham.

By Mrs. Marsh Caldwell.

"Mrs. Marsh is one of the most admirable of our lady novelists. In her works there are always to be found high principle, good taste, sense, and refinement. The grace of her style, its tranquillity, its unstudied but by no means negligent elegance, have a peculiar charm. 'Emilia Wyndham' is a story wrought out with the skill and unexaggerated pathos with which her readers are familiar. Its pathetic and refined beauty will appeal irresistibly to all readers."

7

The Fortunes of Glencore.

By Charles Lever.

"This is a new edition of a story by the author of 'Charles O'Malley,' in which, to some extent departing from the endeavour to arrest and retain attention by the hurry of incident and the bustle and activity which are attendant upon the scenes in which the author has been most generally and favourably known to the public, he seeks, by spiritual delineations of character and careful limnings of idiosyncrasy, to establish himself as an elucidator of mental action. Like all of Lever's writings, the 'Fortunes of Glencore' is a very readable book."—*Liverpool Advertiser.*

—○—

One of Them.

By Charles Lever.

"The novels of Charles Lever, republished in a cheap form, must prove most acceptable to a very large portion of the readers of works of fiction. There is no modern writer who has thrown so much of genial mirth, such native humour, such a collection of humorous incidents, into his stories. There is a raciness in its humour that we look for in vain in the crowd of novel writers of the present day; and, combined with this native humour and ready wit, there are so many life-like sketches of character, so many touches of a master's hand, that one does not so much read of, as speak to and with, the leading characters to whom the reader is introduced."—*Observer.*

—○—

Mattie: a Stray.

By the Author of "Christie's Faith," "Carry's Confession," &c.

"'Mattie: a Stray,' is a novel that ought to take a higher rank than that of an ephemeral work of fiction. Mattie is a charming heroine. She and her life are painted after the life. The story is full of interest at every page."—*Athenæum.*

"A healthier novel we have not seen for many a season. To have depicted such a character as Mattie Gray, and to have depicted it successfully, is no slight achievement, either ethical or æsthetic."—*Saturday Review.*

THE SELECT LIBRARY 2/- VOLUMES.

Charlie Thornhill; OR, THE DUNCE OF THE FAMILY. *By Charles Clarke.*

"'Charlie Thornhill' is obviously the work of a man who is a classical scholar, not from pedantry, but from real love of the thing, and who has had plenty of that experience which we understand by the expression 'seeing the world.' He is quite at home in the drawing-room, and can make an English lady look and speak like an English lady. He can send his heroine to see the hounds 'throw off' without making her talk like a horse dealer and ride like a fiend. Though she does 'come to grief,' which for stage purposes is inevitable, the catastrophe is neither indecent nor improbable; its eventual result is artistically veiled and postponed, so as to keep up our interest to the end of the story; and her character is so well drawn, while at the same time so much is left to the reader's own imagination, that he falls as deeply in love with frank, sunshiny, blue-eyed Edith Dacre as does Charles Thornhill himself."—*The Times*.

Thorney Hall.

By Holme Lee.

"There is much quiet power evinced in 'Thorney Hall,' combined with a thoroughly healthy and invigorating tone of thought. It develops the practical heroism that lies in the most unromantic duties of daily life. The story is extremely interesting."—*Athenæum*.

Gilbert Messenger.

By Holme Lee.

"The subject is handled with singular delicacy and truthfulness."—*Examiner*.

"A condensed and powerfully written story."—*Athenæum*.

"A work of remarkable skill and power."—*Spectator*.

Woodleigh.

By F. W. Robinson,

Author of "Wildflower," &c., &c.

"This book has sterling merit: it is likely to sustain and extend an already high reputation."—*Press*.

Uncle Silas.

By J. S. Le Fanu,
Author of "All in the Dark."

"Perhaps no writer of the present day is so free as Mr. Le Fanu. His characters stand out distinct and definite, with a breadth of colouring and mastery of outline such as prove him a skilled anatomist of the human heart. Its inmost variations are known to him, whether in the depth of malicious perversity or the high religious soaring that brings us into neighbourhood with angels. His 'Uncle Silas' may rank with the most masterly creations in the long generations of novels, and there is scarcely a character in any of the numerous volumes he has given to the public that is not distinct with the same creative skill. With respect to the novel by this prolific and popular writer now under notice, we may safely affirm that it is the greatest success he has yet achieved."

Found Dead.

By the Author of "Lost Sir Mas-singberd," "Family Scapegrace."

"This tale, which, notwithstanding the author's protest, we shall take leave to call 'sensational,' is very good for all that, as good, perhaps, as any of the writer's stories, which are always powerful, and certainly exhibiting fewer faults of style. It recalls, as we read, something of the sensation mixed of fascination and terror which the readers of 'Caleb Williams' must feel. We are possibly using a comparison unfamiliar to most of the new generation, but all who know Godwin's great novel will appreciate the illustration, and will allow that the praise which it implies is of no ordinary kind. The characters generally are vigorously sketched."—*Spectator*.

The Constable of the Tower.

By W. Harrison Ainsworth.

"Is an exceedingly entertaining novel. It assures Mr. Ainsworth more than ever in his position as one of the ablest fiction writers of the day."

THE SELECT LIBRARY 2/- VOLUMES.

Doctor Thorne.

By Anthony Trollope.

"The fact that this is the 12th edition of this popular and delightful story is a proof of the favourable reception that it has met with amongst the novel-reading public. It is very rare in these days of rapid production that a work of fiction meets with such abundant success. We are not surprised at it, for there is a great charm in the manly honesty, the perseverance, the indifference to professional etiquette, and above all, in the affection of the doctor, for his niece Mary Thorne, which must make him a favourite with every reader. Then Mary Thorne is a heroine of the right stamp, courted and beloved, in spite of all aristocratic surrounding influences, by young Gresham, of Greshambury, and in spite of the doubt that hangs about her parentage. The two young people are models of faithfulness, and in the end everything comes right as it should come."—*Western Daily Mercury*.

—o—

Luttrell of Arran.

By Charles Lever.

"Nor can we pass from the consideration of Mr. Lever's earlier romances without according our cordial approbation of the admirable ballads, fighting songs, and drinking songs, which are interspersed throughout the pages of those books. These songs are full of spirit—they have all the drollery, dash, and devilry peculiar to the land of the shamrock and shillelah. If they have here and there a flavour of poteen, the scent of the heather and the breath of the mountain breeze are equally strong in them. It is almost impossible to read them without singing them, and almost impossible to hear them sung without wishing to fight, drink, or dance."

—o—

Woman's Ransom.

By F. W. Robinson,

Author of "Milly's Hero."

"A Woman's Ransom" will fascinate the attention of the reader to the very end."—*John Bull*.

"The interest of this story is unflagging."—*Observer*.

Bella Donna.

By Percy Fitzgerald.

"There are certain characteristics in this novel which give it a peculiar place apart from most of the other novels of the season. It is not often, now-a-days, that we see the attempt made—or, if made, carried out with success—to construct a tale out of the development of sheer force of character. The interest of 'Bella Donna' lies in the skilful manner in which the plot is worked out by the subtle brain and artful carriage of the heroine. There is a degree of originality and vigour about the writer, &c. . . . The end is hurried on with an abruptness . . . unless, indeed, he has intentionally acted upon the hint of Mr. Weller, and designed to make us wish there was more of it."—*Saturday Review*.

—o—

The Ogilvies.

By the Author of "The Head of the Family," "John Halifax," &c.

"The book is charming. It is written with deep earnestness and pervaded by a noble and loving philosophy; while, in giving form to her conceptions, the writer evinces at once a fine and subtle imagination, and that perception of minute characteristics which gives to fiction the life-like truth of biography. Nor does she want the power to relieve her more serious view by one of genial and well-directed humour."—*Athenæum*.

—o—

The Young Heiress.

By Mrs. Trollope.

"The best of Mrs. Trollope's novels."—*Standard*.

"The knowledge of the world which Mrs. Trollope possesses in so eminent a degree is strongly exhibited in the pages of this novel."—*Observer*.

—o—

Ned Locksley,

THE ETONIAN.

FOURTH EDITION.

"A splendid production. The story, conceived with great skill, is worked out in a succession of powerful portraitures, and of soul-stirring scenes."

THE SELECT LIBRARY 2/- VOLUMES.

The Bertrams.

By *Anthony Trollope.*

"The Bertrams' are two brothers and a son of the younger. The latter, the hero of the story, is as agreeable a hero as any we have met for some time, being neither of the morbid nor of the 'muscular Christian' kind. The elder Bertram is a miser who has amassed half a million of money. He is hard, shrewd, and cynical, but not without affection for his nephew, whom he describes contemptuously, but with some truth, as having 'a good heart and,' in spite of a double-first, a 'bad head.' The hero's father is one of the best drawn characters in the book. On the whole, we cannot say more of 'The Bertrams' than that it is one of the best novels of the season."

—*Daily News.*

—○—

Carry's Confession.

By the Author of "Owen,"
"Mattie: a Stray," &c.

"There is a great deal of sterling merit in this author's writings. The present interesting story tells an intricate history simply and well. The *dramatis personæ* are well drawn, and show a thorough knowledge of human life. 'Carry's Confession' is certainly a superior work, and one which will add to the good opinion generally held of its author."—*Observer.*

—○—

Wildflower.

By the Author of "Woodleigh."

"A book which when taken in hand will not be willingly laid down by any novel reader till he has ended it."— *Athenæum.*

"One of the best novels it has lately been our fortune to meet with. The plot is ingenious and novel, and the characters are sketched with a masterly hand."—*Press.*

—○—

Under the Spell.

By *F. W. Robinson,*
Author of "Wildflower," "Milly's Hero," &c.

"This is the best story hitherto written by a very pleasant novelist. It is throughout a good story, that nobody will leave unfinished."—*Examiner.*

10

A Day's Ride:

A LIFE'S ROMANCE.

By *Charles Lever.*

"Some of Lever's creations are admirable, and their distinctiveness so marked that we feel almost disposed to agree with a critic in 'Blackwood' a couple of months ago, who declared that he saw no reason to doubt that Mickey Free and Major Monsoon and Kenny O'Leary and Baby Blake, Mary Martin and Kate O'Donoghue, and Kenny and Mrs. Dodd, should live, along with Jeanie Deans, or Matthew Bramble, or Squire Western, as distinctly recognised types of national character. Latterly Mr. Lever has shifted ground in a great measure, for reasons which he explains in the preface of the volume before us,"—*Inverness Courier.*

—○—

Olive.

By Author of "The Ogilvies,"
"John Halifax," &c.

"It is a common cant of criticism to call every historical novel the 'best that has been produced since Scott,' and to bring 'Jane Eyre' on the tape whenever a woman's novel happens to be in question. In despite thereof we will say that no novel published since 'Jane Eyre' has taken such a hold of us as this 'Olive,' though it does not equal that story in originality and in intensity of interest. It is written with eloquence and power."—*Review.*

—○—

Aunt Margaret's Trouble.

By *Frances Eleanor Trollope.*

FOURTH EDITION.

"Rarely have we met with a more interesting book than this. The story is of a most thrilling description. The authoress writes with much vigour, and from the faithful delineation of her characters, the admirable selection of the incidents, and the graphic description of scenes and events, the reader is enchanted with the work throughout."

THE SELECT LIBRARY 2/- VOLUMES.

Never Forgotten.

By Percy Fitzgerald.

"In 'Never Forgotten' he has elaborated a picture which has many merits, and in which the most prominent figure deserves very high praise. The character of Captain Fernor is an original creation, and deserves to be studied. . . . Mr. Fitzgerald's hero bears no great resemblance to Mr. Trollope's Crosbie. . . . Crosbie is a commonplace man of society. But Fernor's is an exceptional character; his figure stands out in prominent relief from the crowd of walking gentlemen of fiction. . . . The minor characters are for the most part thoroughly life-like. Liller Brett is a capital sketch; Hanbury forms another; and so does Sir Hopkins Pocock. Lady Laura, too, is excellent, and there is grim humour about the description of her last struggle. Indeed, the story is full of humour, and there is real nature in it also."

Elsie Venner.

A ROMANCE OF DESTINY.

By Oliver Wendell Holmes,

Author of "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table."

"We recommend all who are in search of a fascinating novel to read this work for themselves. They will find it well worth their while. There is a freshness and originality about it quite charming, and there is a certain nobleness in the treatment, both of sentiment and incident, which is not often found."

The Clyffards of Clyffe.

By the Author of "Lost Sir Massingberd," &c.

"The interest of this story is well sustained to the last."—*Reader.*

"The author displays imaginative faculties of a higher order than in his previous works. Throughout the whole book there is a pervading sense of power and finish."—*Post.*

"A clever novel."—*Examiner.*

"A charming book. From incident to incident the reader is led in pleasant surprise and ever-growing interest."—*Star.*

The O'Donoghue.

By Charles Lever.

"The introduction of this beautiful and brilliant work into the Select Library is a healthy sign of the times, and speaks well for the sagacity and judgment of the eminent publishers. 'The O'Donoghue' is a tale of Ireland fifty years ago, and it is told with the charm of manner which, more than any other writer of the day, distinguishes Charles Lever. It certainly possesses all the elements of a good novel, combining graphic and life-like portraiture of persons, exquisite descriptions of scenery, vigorous and well sustained narrative, a plot intensely interesting, and wonderful constructive power throughout. It is indeed an admirable work and we welcome it as one of the best that has hitherto appeared from the master hand of Lever."—*Shrewsbury Journal.*

Head of the Family.

By the Author of "John Halifax."

FOURTEENTH EDITION.

"We have arrived at the last and by far the most remarkable of our list of novels, 'The Head of the Family,' a work which is worthy of the author of 'The Ogilvies,' and, indeed, in most respects, a great advance on that. It is altogether a very remarkable and powerful book, with all the elements necessary for a great and lasting popularity. Scenes of domestic happiness, gentle and tender pathos, abound throughout it, and are, perhaps, the best and highest portions of the tale."—*Guardian.*

The Second Mrs. Tillotson.

By Percy Fitzgerald.

"The jovial and unconscious hypocrisy of Mr. Tilney is delicious; and the way in which he mixes up ideas, and jumbles together quotations is charming.

We laugh at the old schemer; but we pity and admire him all the same. He is a man in whom Thackeray would have delighted. . . . He is an excellently drawn character."—*Saturday Review.*

THE SELECT LIBRARY 2/- VOLUMES.

Charles Auchester.

DEDICATED TO THE RIGHT HON.
B. DISRAELI.

"The author has originality and a strong imagination."—*Times*.

"Music has never had so glowing an advocate as the author of these volumes. There is an amazing deal of ability displayed in them."—*Herald*.

"The life of an enthusiast in music, by himself. The work is full of talent. The sketches of the masters and artists are life-like. In Seraphael all will recognise Mendelssohn, and in Miss Benette, Miss Lawrence, and Anastase, Berlioz, Jenny Lind, and another well-known to artist life, will be easily detected. To every one who cares for music, the volumes will prove a delightful study."—*Britannia*.

—○—

Two Marriages.

By the Author of "John Halifax,
Gentleman," &c.

"We have no hesitation in affirming the 'Two Marriages' to be in many respects the very best book that the author has yet produced. Rarely have we read a work written with so exquisite a delicacy, full of so tender an interest, and conveying so salutary a lesson."—*British Quarterly Review*.

—○—

Mary Seaham.

By Mrs. Grey,

Author of "The Gambler's Wife."

"Equal to any former novel by its author."—*Athenæum*.

"An admirable work — a powerfully conceived novel, founded on a plot of high moral and dramatic interest." — *John Bull*.

—○—

Misrepresentation.

By Anna H. Drury,

Author of "Deep Waters."

"This book is full of genius, and contains many strikingly beautiful passages. It well deserves to find readers. Those who begin it will certainly feel inclined to finish it."

12

Harry Lorrequer.

By Charles Lever.

"Who needs introducing to Charles Lever, the most rollicking, jovial, as he is the most truthful and natural of Irish novelists? This new and very cheap edition of 'Harry Lorrequer' will revive the pleasure that waited upon its first perusal many years ago. Mr. Lever's fame as a novelist is certainly based upon his wonderful power of invention, his audacious fun, his unexaggerated treatment of passion and sentiment, and the unrivalled genuineness of his Irish characters. This work deserves a cozy place on the shelves of those who do not already possess the dearer and less handy editions."—*Derby Reporter*.

—○—

Slaves of the Ring;

OR, BEFORE AND AFTER.

By F. W. Robinson.

"A very good story. The reader cannot but feel interested in the loves, the joys, and sorrows of 'The Slaves of the Ring.' It is no small praise to say that the present tale possesses in almost every respect the good qualities of the author's previous works."—*Observer*.

"These volumes well sustain the author's reputation."—*John Bull*.

—○—

Christie's Faith.

By the Author of "Owen: a Waif,"
"Mattie: a Stray."

"This book deserves to be singled out from the ordinary run of novels on more than one account. The design and execution are both good. The characters are original, clearly conceived, and finely as well as strongly delineated. Christie herself is a delightful sketch."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

—○—

Tilbury Nogo.

By Whyte Melville.

"A capital novel, of the 'Charles O'Malley' school, full of dashing adventure, with scenes of real history cleverly introduced in the narrative."

THE SELECT LIBRARY 2/- VOLUMES.

Barrington.

By Charles Lever.

"This is a new and cheap edition in one volume of one of Mr. Charles Lever's recent novels, and one which, considering its general merits, holds a very respectable position amongst the varied works of that author. There is certainly nothing very remarkable in the plot of the story, or the manner of its execution, but it maintains its interest throughout, and presents one or two characters which may claim the merit (for it is merit now-a-days) of decided originality. The book is well worth reading, and in its present form will no doubt find many admirers."—*Hampshire Telegraph.*



The Half-Sisters.

By Miss Jewsbury.

FOURTH EDITION.

"This is a tale of passion. The heroine, by birth an Italian, is an actress, who begins her professional career in the circus from want, and leaves the stage its prima donna, to marry a nobleman. The story of her privations and temptations is well written, and painfully true. The interest of the tale never flags, and the various characters introduced bear the stamp of originality without exaggeration."—*Field.*



Married Beneath Him.

By the Author of "Lost Sir Massingberd."

"A very clever, interesting, and well-written novel. The story is not less remarkable for excellence in point of plot and skill in construction than for the bright, pure, tender strain of feeling by which it is pervaded."



The Country Gentleman

By "Scrutator."

"There is plenty of stirring interest in this novel, particularly for those readers who enjoy manly sport."—*Messenger.*

"An exceedingly well written and admirably told story. The characters are cleverly drawn. The incidents are very interesting."—*Sporting Review.*

Geoffry Hamlyn.

By Henry Kingsley.

SIXTH EDITION.

"A more stirring, eventful novel can hardly be named than these Recollections. For prodigality of incident it is positively unrivalled, and, although the final consummation of all things may be easily divined, the interest of the plot is never for a moment permitted to flag. . . . One feels that it was a master's hand which gave them life, and sent them forth to startle and delight the world. . . . One of the most agreeable novels which have come into our hands for many years past."—*Morning Post.*



Castle Richmond.

By Anthony Trollope.

"A novel by the author of 'Doctor Thorne' is certain to yield a good deal of amusement to all novel readers of both sexes, who have the necessary amount of culture and knowledge of the world to bring to the reading of them. 'Castle Richmond' is a clever book; full of acute and accurate observations of men and manners in the south of Ireland, besides containing a good story concerning people worth telling stories about."—*The Globe.*



The Queen of the Seas.

By Captain Armstrong.

"With the exception of Marryat, Captain Armstrong is the best writer of nautical novels England has ever had."—*Sun.*

"Mr. Armstrong is quite at home in writing a tale of the sea. The deeds of noble daring are recounted with a hearty enthusiasm, and a very stirring naval novel is the result."—*Observer.*



The Jealous Wife.

By Miss Pardoe,

Author of the "Rival Beauties."

"A tale of great power. As an author of fiction, Miss Pardoe has never done anything better than this work."—*Globe.*

THE SELECT LIBRARY 2/- VOLUMES.

Tales of all Countries.

By Anthony Trollope.

"These well-written and descriptive tales have already appeared. In their collected form they will be received with pleasure by the reading public, more especially at this season of the year. The tales which will give most satisfaction are, 'The O'Connors of Castle Connor,' 'John Bull on the Guadalquivir,' 'Miss Sarah Jack, of Spanish Town, Jamaica,' and 'The Chateau of Prince Polignac,' but all of them testify to the talent of Mr. Trollope as a clever writer." — *Morning Advertiser.*

Theo Leigh.

By Annie Thomas,
Author of "He Cometh Not,"
"Two Widows," &c.

"The author has surpassed herself in 'Theo Leigh.' The characters are distinctly drawn. The story is simple and spiritedly told. The dialogue is smart, natural, full of character. In short, 'Theo Leigh' takes its place among the cleverest novels of the season, and deserves to be popular. It is the cream of light literature, graceful, brilliant, and continuously interesting."

"In every respect an excellent novel. The interest is unflagging."

John Law, the Projector

By W. H. Ainsworth.

"One novel of the author's may be better than another, but all are racy and good, fresh and vigorous in conception, and finished with the force and precision of a master-hand. This quality of execution is alluringly shown in rivetting the attention, and imparting a lively air of reality to its interesting story and its striking portraiture of character."

Denis Donne.

By Annie Thomas.

"We can conscientiously recommend 'Denis Donne' to everyone who is sensible to the attractions of a well-written and more than commonly interesting novel."

"A good novel." — *Athenæum.*

Lindisfarn Chase.

By Thomas A. Trollope,
Author of "Beppo, the Conscript."

"The lovers of fictional literature will be glad to find that Messrs. Chapman and Hall have issued 'cheap editions' of the works of Thomas A. Trollope, a writer who has the tact of always sustaining the interest of his readers, and the experiences of a 'Lindisfarn Chase' and 'Beppo, the Conscript' are among the most popular works of this author. They are full of incident, and written with the pen of a man who is a keen observer of character and an excellent story-teller."

Jack Hinton.

By Charles Lever.

"He that can follow the adventures of Jack Hinton, Harry Lorrequer, Charles O'Malley, and Tom Burke, without the frequent interruption of hearty laughter, has probably survived all sense of enjoyment in the society of the young. In any case he is not a man to be envied. To us, indeed, there is something of pathos in the repudiation of these books. It is like reading one's old love-letters, or hearing an old friend recount the frolics of one's own youth." — *Blackwood.*

Giulio Malatesta.

By Thomas A. Trollope,
Author of "La Beata."

"Will assuredly be read with pleasure. The book abounds in merit and beauty."

"This work will be read to the very last page with unbroken interest. It is one of the very best stories we have had from the author. It is full of the same power of observation, refinement, and grace which mark all his books."

Agatha's Husband.

By the Author of "John Halifax,"
"Olive," &c.

"One of Miss Muloch's admired fictions, marked by pleasant contrasts of light and shade—scenes of stirring interest and pathetic incidents. The theme is one of touching interest, and is most delicately managed." — *Literary Circular.*

THE SELECT LIBRARY 2/- VOLUMES.

One and Twenty.

By F. W. Robinson,

Author of "Milly's Hero," &c.

"This remarkable novel is every way worthy of notice, whether as regards the verisimilitude of the story, or the simple and unaffected, yet exceedingly graphic style with which it is written. It reads more like a spirited memoir, than a mere creation of the author's brain."

"It is a long time since we have met with so original a tale, or one so true to nature—true in the lessons which it teaches, as well as in the pictures which it draws."—*John Bull*.

Marietta.

By T. A. Trollope,

Author of "La Beata," &c.

"Mr. Thomas A. Trollope, always a prime favourite of ours, has excelled himself in 'Marietta.' It is a charming book—charming not only for its exquisitely graphic and accurate pictures of Italian life in country and city, but still more so for its admirable delineations of character."—*The Press*.

Austin Elliot.

By Henry Kingsley.

SEVENTH EDITION.

"A book which it is impossible not to like—and that not simply for its literary excellence, the construction of its plot, the beauty of its style; but still more for the earnestness of purpose, the genial spirit, and the manly tone by which it is characterised."—*Nonconformist*.

"This novel fulfils the first purpose of novels, it interests and amuses."—*Saturday Review*.

Silcote of Silcotes.

By Henry Kingsley.

SIXTH EDITION.

"Every scene in the book is described with great freshness and realistic power. We will freely confess that the book is a delightful one to read, and that there is not a line of dull writing in it from beginning to end."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

Miss Mackenzie.

By Anthony Trollope.

"It is the union of fertility, readability, and consummate cleverness, which makes us in gaping wonderment abound when we take up 'Miss Mackenzie.' On careful perusal we find it excellent: in Mr. Trollope's quietest tone of humour."—*Globe*.

Milly's Hero.

By F. W. Robinson,

Author of "Grandmother's Money."

"The situation of two women in love with the same man has always been a favourite subject with writers of fiction. The author of 'Milly's Hero' has depicted with considerable skill the moral attitude of two women under such circumstances. The book is worth reading."—*Saturday Review*.

The Hillyars and the Burtons.

A STORY OF TWO FAMILIES.

By Henry Kingsley.

EIGHTH EDITION.

"Is an uncommonly amusing and interesting book, because of the author's own nature, which is infused into every page, and because of the brilliant bits of writing about Australia and its colonists. These last flash out like gems from the rest of the narrative."—*Globe*.

Ravenshoe.

By Henry Kingsley.

TENTH EDITION.

"There is an immense body of vitality in this book—humour, imagination, observation in the greatest wealth, and that delightful kind of satire which springs from a warm heart well reined in by a keen intellect."—*Spectator*.

Leighton Court.

By Henry Kingsley.

NINTH EDITION.

"It is told skilfully, and is fresh, dashing, and interesting."—*British Quarterly*.

"One of the most agreeable things Mr. Kingsley has written."—*Saturday Review*.

The Select Library of Fiction

CONTINUATION OF TWO SHILLING VOLUMES.

VOL.		
225	Tony Butler.	CHARLES LEVER.
226	Not Wooed, but Won.	JAMES PAYN.
227	That Boy of Norcott's.	CHARLES LEVER.
230	Bernard Marsh.	G. P. R. JAMES.
232	Morley Court.	Author of "UNCLE SILAS."
234	A Passion in Tatters.	ANNIE THOMAS.
235	The Old Maid's Secret.	E. MARLETT.
236	Ensemble.	Author of "O. V. H."
237	Woman's Vengeance.	JAMES PAYN.
238	Cecil's Tryst.	JAMES PAYN.
239	Hawskview.	HOLME LEE.
242	La Vendée.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
244	Lady Anna.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
245	St. Aubyns of St. Aubyn.	Author of "CHARLEY NUGENT."
266	Two Widows.	ANNIE THOMAS.
268	He Cometh Not, She Said.	ANNIE THOMAS.
269	The Maskleynes.	ANNIE THOMAS.
270	Hagarene.	Author of "GUY LIVINGSTONE."
271	May.	MRS. OLIPHANT.
272	In the Days of My Youth.	AMELIA B. EDWARDS.
273	Lost for Gold.	KATHERINE KING.
274	No Alternative.	ANNIE THOMAS.
275	Colonel Dacre.	Author of "CASTE."
276	For Love and Life.	Mrs. OLIPHANT.
277	Last of the Mortimers.	Mrs. OLIPHANT.
278	My Son's Wife.	Author of "CASTE."
279	Beautiful Edith.	Author of "URSULA'S LOVE STORY."
280	Squire Arden.	Mrs. OLIPHANT.
281	Lost Bride.	LADY CHATTERTON.
282	Bruna's Revenge.	Author of "CASTE."
283	Queen of the Regiment.	KATHERINE KING.
284	Wild Georgie.	Mrs. MIDDLEMASS.
285	Ombra.	Mrs. OLIPHANT.
286	First in the Field.	Author of "RECOMMENDED TO MERCY."
287	Pearl.	Author of "CASTE."

The Select

VOL.		
288	A Point of Honour.	Author of "ARCHIE, LOVELL."
289	The White House by the Sea.	
290	Lilian's Penance.	Author of "FIRST IN THE FIELD."
291	Entanglements.	Author of "CASTE."
292	At Her Mercy:	JAMES PAYN.
292	Caste.	Author of "BRUNA'S REVENGE."
294	Off the Line.	LADY CHARLES THYNNE.
295	Ladies of Lovel Leigh.	
	Author of "QUEEN OF THE COUNTY."	
296	Madonna Mary.	Mrs. OLIPHANT.
297	Queen of the County.	Author of "THREE WIVES."
298	Miss Carew.	AMELIA B. EDWARDS.
299	Olympus to Hades.	Mrs. FORRESTER.
301	Mr. Arle.	Author of "CASTE."
302	Three Wives.	Author of "QUEEN OF THE COUNTY."
303	Book of Heroines.	Author of "LADIES OF LOVEL LEIGH."
304	Debenham's Vow.	AMELIA B. EDWARDS.
305	Fair Women.	Mrs. FORRESTER.
306	Father Godfrey.	Author of "ANNE DYSART."
307	Monsieur Maurice.	AMELIA B. EDWARDS.
308	Sacristan's Household.	
	Author of "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE."	
309	John and I.	Miss BETHAM EDWARDS.
310	Queen of Herself.	ALICE KING.
311	Sun and Shade.	Author of "URSULA'S LOVE STORY."
312	Ursula's Love Story.	Author of "SUN AND SHADE."
313	Wild Flower of Ravensworth.	Miss BETHAM EDWARDS.
314	Lords and Ladies.	Author of "QUEEN OF THE COUNTY."
315	Lisabee's Love Story.	Miss BETHAM EDWARDS.
316	The Days of My Life.	Mrs. OLIPHANT.
317	Harry Muir.	Mrs. OLIPHANT.

HALF-A-CROWN VOLUMES.

MAY BE ORDERED BY THE NUMBERS.

VOL.		
18	Charles O'Malley.	CHARLES LEVER.
20	The Daltons.	CHARLES LEVER.
23	Knight of Gwynne.	CHARLES LEVER.
25	Dodd Family Abroad.	CHARLES LEVER.
28	Tom Burke.	CHARLES LEVER.
30	Davenport Dunn.	CHARLES LEVER.

Library of Fiction

HALF-A-CROWN VOLUMES.—*Continued.*

VOL.		
33	Roland Cashel.	CHARLES LEVER.
42	Martins of Cro' Martin.	CHARLES LEVER.
48	Sir Jasper Carew.	CHARLES LEVER.
54	Maurice Tiernay.	CHARLES LEVER.
85	Doctor Thorne.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
100	The Bertrams.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
116	Orley Farm.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
120	Can You Forgive Her?	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
186	Phineas Finn.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
187	He Knew He Was Right.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
203	Ralph the Heir.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
211	Sir Brook Fossbrooke.	CHARLES LEVER.
213	Bramleighs.	CHARLES LEVER.
228	Lord Kilgobbin.	CHARLES LEVER.
231	Charley Nugent. Author of "ST. AUBYN'S OF ST. AUBYN."	
243	Eustace Diamonds.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
267	Phineas Redux.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.
300	Vicar of Bullhampton.	ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

ONE SHILLING VOLUMES.

VOL.		
246	Confidences.	Author of "CARR OF CARRLYON."
247	Counterparts.	Author of "CHARLES AUCHESTER."
248	Cruellest Wrong of All.	Author of "MARGARET."
249	Lost and Won.	GEORGIANA M. CRAIK.
250	My First Season.	Author of "COUNTERPARTS."
251	Nuts and Nutcrackers.	CHARLES LEVER.
252	A Simple Woman.	Author of "NUT BROWN MAIDS."
253	Skirmishing.	Author of "COUSIN STELLA."
254	Who Breaks Pays.	Author of "SKIRMISHING."
255	Nanette and Her Lovers.	TALBOT GWYNNE.
256	Florence Templar.	Mrs. F. VIDAL.
257	Adrian L'Estrange, or, Moulded out of Faults.	
258	Winifred's Wooing.	GEORGIANA M. CRAIK.
259	Grey's Court.	Edited by Lady CHATTERTON.
260	Over the Cliffs.	Mrs. CHANTER.
261	On the Line.	BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.
262	Tales of the Trains.	CHARLES LEVER.
263	Race for a Wife.	HAWLEY SMART.

The Select Library of Fiction

New Volumes.

Clara Levesque. W. GILBERT.

Two Kisses. HAWLEY SMART.

Layton Hall. MARK LEMON.

Paul Wynter's Sacrifice.
Mrs. DUFFUS HARDY.

Gold Elsie. E. MARLITT.

Forgotten by the World.
KATHERINE MACQUOID.

Broken Bonds.
HAWLEY SMART.

False Cards. HAWLEY SMART.

Squire Beechwood.
"SCRUTATOR."

Magdalen Hepburn.
Mrs. OLIPHANT.

Humorous Stories.
JAMES PAYN.

Narrow Escape.
ANNIE THOMAS.

Debenham's Vow.
AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

Fair Women. Mrs. FORRESTER.

Father Godfrey.
Author of "ANNE DYSART."

Monsieur Maurice.
AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

Sacristan's Household. Author
of "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE."

John and I.
MATILDA B. EDWARDS.

Queen of Herself.
ALICE KING.

Sun and Shade.
Author of "URSULA'S LOVE STORY."

Ursula's Love Story.
Author of "SUN AND SHADE."

Wild Flower of Ravens-
worth. MATILDA B. EDWARDS.

Lords and Ladies. Author of
"QUEEN OF THE COUNTY."

Lisabee's Love Story.
MATILDA B. EDWARDS.

The Days of My Life.
Mrs. OLIPHANT.

Harry Muir. Mrs. OLIPHANT.

Heart and Cross.
Mrs. OLIPHANT.

Checkmate. J. S. LEFANU.

House on the Moor.
Mrs. OLIPHANT.

PRICE TWO SHILLINGS.

Sold by all Booksellers

